

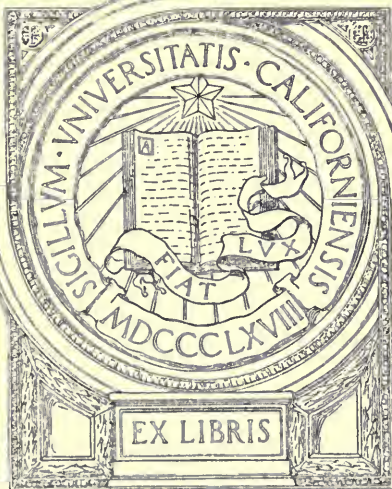


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LIFE IN PARLIAMENT.



LIFE IN PARLIAMENT

BEING THE

EXPERIENCE OF A MEMBER IN
THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

FROM 1886 TO 1892 INCLUSIVE.

By SIR RICHARD TEMPLE, BART., M.P.,

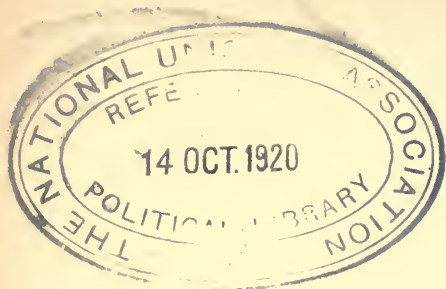
G.C.S.I., C.I.E., D.C.L., LL.D.

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TO
MY PARLIAMENTARY COMRADES OF THE
CONSERVATIVE PARTY

THIS NARRATIVE

Is Dedicated

IN THE HOPE THAT IT MAY BE
A MIRROR OF THEIR RECOLLECTIONS.

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PREFACE.

I DESIRE to explain briefly what is aimed at in this narrative, and what is not. In the first place, it is not in any sense autobiographical. I undertake to portray the House of Commons certainly, but not my own conduct in Parliament. I may, perhaps, have been among the actors on a crowded stage, or the figures in a well-filled canvas. But if this shall ever come to be described, the description must be given by other hands than mine. I rarely mention myself at all in the narrative; whenever I do so, it is either to illustrate the life led by others besides me, or

to show how I became cognisant of what is set forth.

Again, a popular analysis of the rules, regulations, practices, traditions of the House may be needed ; but I do not undertake to present that fully. I offer only as much of that as may form a frame, so to speak, for a picture replete with beings of movement and animation.

Further, a closely reasoned account of the policy and proceedings of the Conservative Government and of the Unionist Party in the Parliament of 1886 to 1893 may be desirable. Though I was a Private Member who supported that Government, and belonged to that Party, I do not offer such an account in any completeness. I shall often refer to that policy and those proceedings, but the references will always be for the purpose of

describing the position and the ideas of Private Members.

It is life, then, that I wish to paint, life as lived—not by Ministers and ex-Ministers, nor by those who “pair” frequently and are present only in the important divisions—but by those Private Members who attend constantly, and are the working bees in the Parliamentary hive. Such Private Members may or may not be conspicuous personalities, but they are the *Cent Gardes*, the Theban band. They form the backbone of the Assembly, and the mainstay of every Ministry that comes into Office. Surely this class, though very limited—more limited, indeed, than it ought to be—is as important as any class in the community. Therefore I try to depict the terms, the conditions, the vicissitudes of its existence.

Those Private Members, of whom I was one in the years between 1886 and 1893, used familiarly to be called "The Old Guard." I wish to show how this Old Guard marched through each Session, how it fought its way, how its endurance was tried, how it emerged from the smoke of contest.

All this time it was my fancy to keep a Parliamentary Journal of four pages for each day, and then to bind the entries in a Volume for each Session. It occurred to me that if a Member, who had sat all the hours of every working day on the Bench immediately behind Pitt, or Peel or Palmerston, had also recorded daily what he saw, and heard and knew—his memoir would have interest for the men of some succeeding generation who might wish to enter into the realities of those times. For such memoranda, mostly written inside

the House itself, while each incident is freshly in mind, a graphic and vivid character may be claimed. Now, this Journal is not for publication in my life-time ; but from it I have drawn the present narrative, after verifying many particulars from the official records.

As regards the experiences of myself and my comrades the narrative will be chequered. We were at all the Parliamentary "*spectacula*," watching the gladiators in the arena, listening to the cries of the victors and the vanquished. For the Private Members, except a few who may be favoured by birth or fortune, or other special advantage, the life in Parliament is often fraught with chagrin, vexation and disappointment ; sometimes, too, with harassment in the discharge of duty voluntarily undertaken. Nevertheless they have ample compensation, in that they fulfil a function which otherwise

might fall to those of whom they do not approve—they perform much that is eminently desirable to be performed—they witness much of that which is best worth seeing in their generation, and which could not otherwise be seen.

R. T.

September, 1893.

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LIFE IN PARLIAMENT.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

Life in the House of Commons—Varieties among Members—Materials for the narrative—From 1886 to 1892 inclusive—Franchise Act of 1885.

I PURPOSE in the following pages to describe the life which a working Member of the House of Commons has to lead. This life varies according to the idiosyncrasy of each person. Men primarily enter Parliament from a motive of national, patriotic and public duty; but to this fundamental motive other motives are added. Some Members, from the beginning to the end of their active life, make Parliamentary politics a profession, regarding it as the noblest of professions. Others, again, win and retain their seats partly in order to acquire and sustain a social position, or to run a career, or to rise in a professional sphere, or to satisfy a natural

curiosity regarding the work of an assembly which—subject always to the Crown—is the seat of power for the British Empire, and one of the most important centres of influence in the world. On crucial or critical occasions all Members without distinction will be present to vote. But on ordinary occasions it happens that, with these several motives overlying the fundamental motive, the attendance of Members in the House will be varied. In other words, some will attend more and others less. It does not follow that he who makes politics his pursuit, as a grand profession, will be very regular in attendance. If he be in office there will be public business to which he must apply himself, even though he be within beck and call of the House at a moment's notice. If he be not in office he may be engaged in important meetings outside the House; and for the speeches to be delivered inside the House much preparation in his study at home will be needed. The man of business, being occupied all day, will not attend the House till late in the afternoon. The man of social status will have many public banquets claiming his assistance; indeed nearly all the engagements and avocations of metropolitan society affect Members of Parliament

in a greater or lesser degree. Consequently from one cause or another many Members, who never fail when absolutely needed to speak or to vote, will serve but little on the committees in the forenoon or at mid-day, will attend the House for a while late in the afternoon, will then depart for the evening, and return to the House for an hour or two hours before midnight. It would be difficult or impossible to give any description which would apply to the Parliamentary life led by them.

Others, again, attend regularly, often in the committees before the House meets, and almost always from the meeting of the House to its adjournment after midnight. A description can indeed be given of the Parliamentary life led by them, of their heavy toil and scant recompense, of their troubles and annoyances, of the motives which impel them

“ * * * tot volvere casûs
 . . . tot adire labores.”

Having been myself one of them, I proceed to describe this life as I have known it from 1886 to 1892 inclusive. During that time I saw or heard nearly everything within the four walls of the House itself, and much of what occurred in its precincts.

My account will be prepared from journals and records kept by me from day to day during all these years. It will not be a Parliamentary history of the years, nor a categorical statement of actions and occurrences. Practically every Member belongs, indeed must belong, to a Party. I am attached to the Conservative Party, and my story must be told from a Conservative point of view. It amounts, therefore, only to evidence on one out of two or more sides. But as evidence, with this limitation, it may afford materials for history hereafter. No man, who has been in the thick of a strife between two contending hosts, can properly narrate the whole of any battle. Let him explain what occurred in the host of which he was a unit, the occurrences as he knew them in his own camp, and the proceedings of the adverse host as he saw them from the opposite side. Such a narration will be good so far as it goes. Similarly, let some one of the adversaries describe affairs in his camp, and on his line of action. Then let the historian take the various narratives together, and describe the whole impartially.

In the history of Parliament all times are so Interesting that it is hard to claim a surpassing

interest for one time over another. The space from 1886 to 1892 comprises the first introduction of a Home Rule Bill for Ireland by Mr. Gladstone, his defeat thereon, the consequent formation of the Marquess of Salisbury's Administration after the General Election of 1886, the duration of a Unionist Government until the General Election of 1892. Without any precise comparison with other times, it may at least be said that this particular time has been full of interest and instruction.

The characteristics of the House of Commons have doubtless varied at the different epochs of its history. The aspect of the old House must have been different from that of the House elected after the first Reform Bill, which virtually enfranchised the middle classes. A diverse aspect must have ensued after the second Reform Bill, which enfranchised the artizan classes in the towns. Of these times I have no personal cognizance. Again a new phase appeared after the third Reform Bill of 1885, which enfranchised the rural labourers. It is this latter phase alone with which I am acquainted, and that relates to the House under its latest development.



CHAPTER II.

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

The House of Commons as a Social Club—Qualities of its Members generally—The Labour Members—The Nationalists—The buildings, apartments, and precincts—The great Terrace—The admission of strangers—The Chamber of the House—The arrangement of Parties—The matters of Order—The Speaker—The Chairman of the Committee of the whole House—The Clerks at the Table—The meaning of Obstruction—The work of Supply—Private Members—The time of the House—The Ballot—The Counts-out—The Pairing—Interpellation by Questions—The Committee Rooms upstairs—The Private Bills—The Select Committees—The Whips—The life led by un-official Members.

MR. (now Sir GEORGE) TREVELYAN, in his biography of Lord Macaulay,* thus describes life in the House of Commons as it was in 1853:—

“The tedious and exhausting routine of a political existence; waiting whole evenings for the vote, and then walking half a mile at a foot’s pace round and round the crowded lobbies; dining amidst clamour and confusion, with a division of twenty minutes long between two of the mouthfuls; trudging home at three in the morning through the slush of a

* Vol. II. p. 353.

February thaw ; and sitting behind Ministers in the centre of a closely packed bench during the hottest weeks of a London summer."

Now this description, just half a century old, is literally true of the recent years which I am about to review. Every detail of it is within the experience of myself and scores, perhaps hundreds, of others who are serving in Parliament to-day. It was applied to an experienced Parliamentarian by a nephew equally experienced.

As is well known, the House of Commons used to be called the best club in London. This dictum was probably current from 1840 to 1865, perhaps even to 1870. Whether it was true during that space of time I cannot say. But let us see whether it is true of the years that have passed since 1870, and more particularly of those since 1885, regarding which latter I am a witness.

The House of Commons certainly is *inter alia* a club. It possesses this quality in addition to its other qualities. Scores, almost hundreds, of Members attend there early in the forenoon, and stay with little intermission till past midnight. So they must work, read, write, and take their meals there, day after day, for weeks together. Whether

it is a good club or not, that is the question. It is not in the ordinary sense a political club which belongs to one Party. Indeed it is manifestly the reverse. It is either a social club or not a club at all.

When the franchise was extended in 1885, and when simultaneously the entrance to Parliament was rendered by law much less expensive than before—though it still remained expensive in some degree—apprehensions and predictions were rife, to the effect that the quality of the Members would deteriorate. Happily that has not, on the whole, proved to be the case. Under this system three Parliaments have already been elected, and with certain exceptions the quality of the Members has been very good. Some are men of science, or learning, or literary fame; others are leaders in several professions, or magnates in the commercial world; others are distinguished in the service of the Empire abroad, with a record of historic fame. The landed interest, though not so largely represented as formerly, has still many excellent representatives. The noble and titled classes can shew many of their rank among the Commoners. The eldest sons of Peers are found in some

numbers. They say that one night there was a Baronets' debate, because every one who took part in the discussion happened to belong to that class. Hence it is to be inferred that candidates of social status and of high repute are very often acceptable to the democratic electorate. At the Speaker's Levees for Members, the number of decorated persons is often so large that the gathering looks like one of diplomats rather than of popular representatives.

Again, in most quarters of the House there is a goodly proportion of young men, nearly always of good station, who enter Parliament early in life, intending to make its business their life-long profession. These become habituated to the place and win their way in it to a degree rarely attained, perhaps hardly attainable, by any other class of Members. Moreover, the House feels the same interest which is felt everywhere else in youth. It delights to see the handsome young man rise to speak with engaging manners and fresh vibrating voice. The elder Members rejoice to notice that the extended Electorate still returns many of those who may be regarded as the coming men, as the Parliamentarians of the future.

On the other hand there is no denying that a certain proportion of Members, a proportion small as yet but growing, does consist of those who, whatever be their virtues and merits, do belong to another class. These are the so-called Labour Members. They do not, in fact, represent working men more than other Members. Indeed, with the fewest exceptions, all Members hold their seats largely through the votes of working men. The heir to a dukedom or a marquissate, the holder of an ancient baronetcy, has as many artisans or labourers among his constituent supporters as any of the Labour Members. The name of Labour Member is applied to, and quite accepted by, one who has been a working man, and who may be still directly interested in the labouring classes. Usually he is connected with one or other of the bodies which, under various designations, compose the organization of labour throughout the kingdom.

Again, the extension of the franchise in 1885 caused a remarkable change in the Irish representation. About one-fifth of the Irish Members still belonged to the same sections as the British Members. The remaining four-fifths, or the Nationalists, represented a political party which finds no

counterpart in Britain, and which will claim much notice in my narrative.

With these separate elements, the House of Commons cannot be regarded as a club of the first rank. For example, in clubs of acknowledged eminence, say "The Athenæum" or "The Travellers," there may be infinite diversity of opinion and sentiment among the Members, but there is a bond of mental affinity, of sympathy, of association. Such a bond subsists in the House of Commons to perfection among Members of the Conservative Party at least, and probably of other Parties also, though possibly in a less perfect degree. It also exists between Conservatives and some sections of Liberals, notwithstanding political differences. Thus many friendships, many valued acquaintanceships are formed, which might never have begun but for the association within the House of Commons. For all that, there is not, and can never be, any such bond knitting together the Members as a whole. For this reason alone the House, though a club, is not one of the first order. To call it nowadays the best club in London would be a misnomer.

For illustration, a very few familiar instances may be adduced. There are several dining-rooms ;

and among them is a fine room in which Members of the Radical and Nationalist Parties usually dine. Probably a Conservative would not be welcome, nor would he feel at home, if dining there. In another dining-room, with a more exalted atmosphere, one table is by courtesy reserved for Cabinet Ministers, another for ex-Cabinet Ministers, another for the subordinate Members of the Government of the day, another for leading Liberal Unionists, and so forth. A Nationalist might not perhaps care to dine there. In the afternoon tea-room, at one of the many tables a mixed group of politicians may be seen, tossing their opinions about with good-humoured banter, like shuttlecocks between battledores. But at another table a set of graver politicians may be sitting, while two or three chairs are vacant; one of these may be hastily taken by some Member from another Party in politics, but he will suddenly rise, or make some excuse for departure, on perceiving who his companions are. Notoriously it is indiscreet and unsafe to converse on politics without circumspection, for an opponent may be within hearing. It is even perilous to speak to a strange Member unless his identity is known; otherwise offence might be unwittingly

given, or even worse harm than that might be done. In the smoking-room I imagine the conversation is less reserved than elsewhere. Instances might be multiplied, but it is readily seen that the ways of the House of Commons as a club, cannot be those of the clubs which are socially the most esteemed.

But apart from the company and the society, it may be interesting to review the household accommodation which is afforded by the nation to its legislators. As is well known, the building which receives the Parliament is founded on the old Palace of Westminster. Whatever be the artistic judgment regarding its architecture, it is undoubtedly one of the finest and grandest civil structures in the world. Let us see what accommodation it affords as a clubhouse to Members of the House of Commons. With this view I will conduct the reader through those portions of the building which are reserved for Members only, or for their friends whom they escort under strict limitations. He must set aside, *pro hac vice*, the magnificent approaches to the Houses of Parliament, by Westminster Hall, St. Stephen's Hall, and the Central Hall, of which even England in all her glory may be proud. For these are all open to the public view with but little

reserve. We will therefore enter by the Members' entrance of the House of Commons, and we are at once ushered into the ancient cloisters of St. Stephen's, extending on all four sides of a venerable and classic quadrangle. The florid Gothic roof of these cloisters is a noble specimen of mediæval stone-carving. This has long been used as the cloak-room; every Member has his peg, according to alphabetical order of names, on which to hang his coat, but not his hat, which he always takes with him. There is some incongruity in the use to which this exquisite structure is applied. Although that may provoke a smile, yet no thoughtful spectator can fail to regard with interest a precinct thus used by the orators, the statesmen, the famed politicians of many Parliamentary sessions. Adjoining one of the cloisters is a side-room with a still more beautiful roof, wherein, according to well-established tradition, the death-warrant of Charles I. was signed. Close by, half underground, is the crypt of the Royal Chapel of St. Stephen's. This is really a subordinate chapel, of the boldest and yet most graceful design, with the richest ornamentation as regards solidity of material and artistic finish. It has been most

tastefully restored, and is kept with faithful care. Space quite fails me here for describing this marvellous chapel, which is an enduring honour to English art, is the finest thing of its kind in this kingdom, and in its way is hardly to be surpassed in any country.

From the cloisters we ascend by a modern stone staircase of simple yet noble design, to the outer lobby, or ante-room, of the House of Commons; which is the lobby proper, as contradistinguished from the division-lobbies to be mentioned hereafter. This is a square hall, spacious, lofty, well adorned, and quite appropriate for its purpose. Thence we pass through a long passage with cabinets on either side. In these cabinets are lockers, and to each Member is assigned a locker in which to keep his papers. By the passage we are lead to the Library, which is altogether charming. It consists of a series of rooms, five in number, and their great windows overlook the Thames. One room is the vestibule, distinguished for its oriel window; another is called the map-room, where every sort of geographical reference can be made. Then there come, first one room chiefly devoted to Parliamentary records, another to law, another to

literature, and another to art and *belles lettres*. The last-named is replete with volumes of great dimensions according to modern ideas, and remarkable both for richness of binding and beauty of illustration. There is a highly qualified staff of Librarians, who help Members to lay their hands instantly on any book or any state-paper needed for reference. For study, for letter-writing, for culture generally, the highest standard of convenience prevails in this Library.

Descending by a dark and inconvenient staircase we emerge on the great Terrace, stretching for some six hundred feet along the left bank of the Thames, protected from the water's edge by a low wall like the bulwarks of a ship, and sometimes likened in consequence to the deck of the mightiest Atlantic liner. On one side is the mass of Gothic structures. The river view comprises the bridges of Lambeth, of Westminster, and of Waterloo. On the opposite side are St. Thomas's Hospital and the Archbishopal Palace of Lambeth. Here the breeze is ever fresh for those who pace up and down. At night I have here seen a spectacle almost sublime; the vast façade of the dark architecture, with windows lighted by a ruddy light;

miles and miles of lamp-lights reflected in the dark river ; the moon rising pale over Lambeth Palace and imparting hues of greenish grey to the sky in contrast to the rest of the scene. With all the quietude of the immediate surroundings, there is always the distant roll of the traffic over Westminster Bridge.

Thus far the accommodation is seen to be excellent. We must now enter on departments where the accommodation is less satisfactory. The smallness and poverty of the newspaper reading-room would be well-nigh incredible to those who had not seen it, especially as Members read and mark the Journals of the day, both metropolitan and provincial, for the sake not only of pleasure but of public duty. The tea-room also is found to be of meagre and insufficient dimensions when it is much frequented, indeed crowded during the latter part of the afternoon. The three dining-rooms have some pretension, and are tolerably good. But they are scarcely worthy of their position in a national establishment like this, and are inferior to the dining-rooms of the principal clubs in the Metropolis. The commissariat branch and the purveyors' department are under a set of Members chosen every

Session, and called the Kitchen Committee. No doubt the Members thus chosen do their best ; but the result is inferior to that which is attained, not only in the clubs, but also in the private places of entertainment throughout the fashionable parts of the Metropolis. There is, however, an excellently stored cellar. Adjoining the lobby, already mentioned, is a luncheon-bar, which in the hurry and skurry of affairs proves most useful. But the meanness of the little room is quite a wonder.

Adjacent to the same lobby is the Post Office of the House, a place of much consequence. The business done here is enormous. Hither letters come daily for all Members, and for many of them a large part of their private despatches are here received. Many Members, again, who come early and depart late, must necessarily dispose of their correspondence while in the House. Thus the covers to and from this Office must be more than a million in number during a Session, and the receipts in postage stamps must amount to several thousands of pounds sterling. Nevertheless the space is very narrow and contracted.

All round the Chamber of the Commons (which is really the House itself) are two long corridors,

the lower and the upper. The lower is used as the division lobby the moment that the electric bell rings. Off this lower lobby are several bow windows, within which are set writing-tables, where Members write all their notes of an urgent character while the House is sitting, amidst the buzz and hum of conversation around. The tables are crowded almost always, because the space is much too small for the work to be done. The upper corridor is, by courtesy, kept for those who have letters to write demanding quiet thought. As a rule silence is preserved there; and this place is no doubt most convenient. For some Members it has this advantage, that by keeping a door ajar they can hear the most of what is said in the House, so that in event of need they can rush to their places. Other apartments for business—one where Members procure copies of Bills and the Order Books which form the programme of the Parliamentary work, another where they hand in the manuscript of Bills to be printed, another where they give and receive the printed proofs of their speeches—are poor places in respect of the national character of the work. More than this, the conference rooms where they can meet their

constituents singly or in small parties, and where they can receive deputations from those who have matters of public policy to urge, are utterly insufficient.

The Petitions addressed to Members, for presentation to the House, are received not at the Post Office above described, as they would be far too bulky, but in the cloister cloak-room close to the Members' entrance.

The Electric Telegraph Office for the House is situated not off the lobby near the Post Office, but off the great Central Hall that is open to the public. There is also an efficient Telephone adjoining the Members' entrance.

The rules for the admission of strangers of both sexes, though carefully and very properly limited, are yet thoughtfully designed for the benefit of all concerned. The Members soon perceive the anxiety of their friends and supporters to hear the debates if possible, or, failing that, to see the precincts of the House. The accommodation in the galleries within the House, however, is very poor for gentlemen, and for ladies still worse. The fact that such insufficiency continues to be endured, is a monument of British patience. For these

faults there is some compensation in the facilities for showing strangers round the precincts of the House, and also for entertaining them hospitably. It is a peculiarity in the Commissariat department of the House that while the entertainment is what has been described above for the Members themselves, it is fairly good for their guests. There is a place close to the very door of the Chamber where ladies may stand, and through a glass window may see all that goes on almost as well as if they were actually inside the Chamber itself. So popular has the great Terrace become for the afternoon tea of fashionable existence, that on a midsummer afternoon Members invite their lady friends, and for an hour or so the scene resembles that of a brilliant reception. Certainly there is no sight in this kingdom better worth seeing than that which is seen by a stranger, who may be conducted by a Member versed in the locality and its traditions, through St. Stephen's cloisters and quadrangle, the glorious crypt, the old judgment hall of Westminster, the spot carefully identified where Charles I. stood to receive sentence of death, St. Stephen's Hall with the statues of grand Parliamentarians erected almost on the very spot where

they once rose in their places to speak, the Central Hall with its finely arched roof, the frescoed corridor leading to the outer lobby crowded like a beehive where the bees fly away and return to swarm in groups, the Terrace and its surroundings. The Library is not included in the category; nor the historic table in the tea-room where lay the bauble in Cromwell's time and on either side of which sat the great Parliamentarians from Hampden to Pitt. These things can be seen only at hours before the meeting of the House when all is still and vacant. But the object should be to see the living institution when the national stage is crowded with moving figures; and when men whose names are household words brush past the spectator at every moment. It is quite practicable, however, to see the Library first, say before three o'clock, and afterwards to make the tour above described.

Having thus summarized the points for and against the House of Commons as a club, let us briefly regard it as a place of business.

The Chamber of the Commons was designed perfectly well for the purpose in view. The designers evidently understood that on an average a portion only, say one-third or one-half, of the Mem-

bers, would be in their places. Half a century ago this estimate may have been quite correct. Indeed it is still correct during two-thirds of the time occupied by sittings of the House, and for this part of the time the dimensions of the Chamber are appropriate enough. Its acoustic properties are all that could be desired. But in these days Members are frequently obliged to attend, or are interested in attending, with nearly their full numbers. At such seasons there is not nearly enough room in the Chamber for its Members. On some occasions, which are often fraught with imperial interest, the over-crowding, and the confused rush which with British impetuosity is sure to ensue, must impair the dignity of the Commons, and must prejudice its order. Apart from these serious instances, it happens once or oftener every week that in the afternoon, or shortly before midnight, places cannot be found by many Members who desire, as they have a right, to see and hear. By universal acknowledgment the present Chamber ought to be enlarged, or a new Chamber constructed. Since 1886 complaints to this effect have been rife. That nothing should have been done up to the present, is one proof out of many proofs that the British, though

on the whole an eminently practical people, do sometimes tolerate faults which to other nations would seem intolerable.

At the northern end of the Chamber is the door with the Doorkeepers, and the Bar with the Serjeant-at-Arms. In front of it is the open space between the rows of Benches on either side, called the Floor of the House. At the southern end is the Speaker's throne, usually called the Chair. In front of it stands the Table of the House, on which the Mace is placed as a symbol of authority by the Serjeant-at-Arms the moment that the Speaker ascends the Chair, to be taken off again the moment that he descends. The Benches with the green leather on the right of the Chair are appropriated to the supporters of the Government of the day, and that nearest the Table is the Treasury Bench where the Ministers sit. Those on the left of the Chair are appropriated to the Opposition, and that nearest the Table is the Front Opposition Bench where the ex-Ministers sit. On each side the rows of Benches are divided midway by a passage called the Gangway. Above the Gangway, on the Government side, sit the personal out-and-out supporters of the Ministry. Below the

Gangway on the same side sit those who are supporters of the Government indeed, but who are not absolutely pledged all round, and who may occasionally take lines of their own. Similarly, above the Gangway on the Opposition side the stalwart Members of that Party will be sitting, the personal supporters of the ex-Ministers, and the like. Below the Gangway on the same side there used to sit in former times the free lances of the Opposition generally. These arrangements are familiar to us all by courteous usage. Though, as a rule, Members who attend regularly do sit at or near the same place—yet to no Member, except to the Ministers or ex-Ministers, is a seat even by courtesy allotted. If he is present at Prayers a Member has a right to affix a label to the seat which he occupies at that moment, and which is his for that day only—otherwise there can be no appropriation of seats.

But these traditional and once normal arrangements have of late years been considerably infringed by two circumstances, first the development of the Irish Nationalist Party, secondly the formation of the Liberal Unionist Party. The Nationalists sit some eighty strong, always below the Gangway on the Opposition side, whether the Government of the

day be favourable to their policy or not, thereby indicating that they are attached to Ireland alone and not to any British Party. This proves inconvenient to the Opposition, whose regular Members are crowded into the space above the Gangway. The Liberal Unionists, though closely allied with the Conservatives, do yet continue to sit on the Liberal side, whether that side happen to be in the Ministerial or in the Opposition quarter. Quite recently they have appropriated certain Benches on the Liberal, or Gladstonian side as it is now called.

These disturbances in the old arrangements have produced a curious effect on the cheering and the counter-demonstrations during the debates. Formerly the orator would receive cheers from his side of the House and counter-demonstrations from the side opposite to him. Nowadays a Conservative Leader may receive cheers from the Liberal Unionists on the side opposite to him, and counter-demonstrations from the Nationalists near him. A Liberal Unionist Leader will receive cheering from the Conservatives on the other side, and the very reverse from the Gladstonians near him. A Gladstonian Leader will be encouraged by the Nationalists on the other side, and discouraged by

the Liberal Unionists behind him. To old Parliamentarians the natural order of things must seem to be somewhat upset by these practices of to-day.

The matter of Order in the Commons has provoked much comment. In fairness to the Members as a whole, this matter claims some brief analysis. Scenes come about now and again which scandalize Parliamentary usage, and stain the time-honoured escutcheon of one who with all her faults is still the Mother of Parliaments. It is but too true that no Party is wholly guiltless of disorder at times. Yet it must be said that this disorder is partly due to the presence of the Irish Members of the Nationalist Party. Besides them, many an individual of one Party and another sometimes causes disturbances. But were it not for the Nationalists such disturbances would be stopped, or kept within manageable dimensions. It is supposed that they are not sorry to see the Imperial Legislature thus troubled, in view to an ulterior policy. Their voices in chorus make the chamber-roof ring and re-echo. Vociferations, reasonable and intelligible, may arise from other quarters of the Chamber, but from the Irish quarter some clamour may be added which renders

the volume of sound meaningless. Nevertheless the House hardly ever loses its head; the storm is almost always controllable, and the din, like the roar of many waters, may subside or cease in a moment, if a certain point in the proceedings is reached. Critical occasions have arisen owing to language from the Nationalists, and, alas! from other Members also, which no provocation could justify. These crises have needed all the tact, conciliation and authority of the Speaker for their settlement. Such deplorable events, however, are not common, and they serve to strengthen the determination of other Members, who form the great majority, to preserve the dignified order of the House by their own practice and example.

Oftimes the House is laughter-loving and demonstrative, eagerly on the watch for the slightest incident that may cause merriment. At many times, on the other hand, it is remarkable for its quietude, its etiquette, its punctilio. I understand that foreign visitors, who are present at ordinary times in the Galleries, are surprised by these sober characteristics. Every personal movement in the Chamber is regulated by an unwritten code, which is not only understood by all Members after their

novitiate, but may also be enforced by the Speaker as the authoritative exponent. There is a rule as to where and when a Member may sit or stand, when he may take his hat off or put it on, when he should bow to Chair as he quits his place, and so forth. A Member may stand bare-headed behind the Bar marked by a purple line on the matting. On the Floor in front of the Bar he may walk up and down to take a seat, but he may not stand for a moment. He may study in his place any print or manuscript, on the subject then before the House. But anything like reading a book or a newspaper in the Chamber is forbidden. A Member may not, indeed, read his speech, but notes in the greatest fulness are allowed; and many passages are obviously committed to memory from a manuscript in the hand of the orator. *Inter alia*, there is a good rule which forbids any one to move or stand even for a moment between the Member addressing the House and the Chair. After the first meeting of a new Parliament the peccadilloes of these various kinds on the part of new Members cause much amusement. Cries of "Order" arise, followed by laughter when it is seen that the offender is unconscious of the offence he is committing. Perhaps even the

Speaker may be obliged to address him by name and correct the mistake. Apart from moments of excitement, the demeanour of Members towards each other, without distinction of Party, and towards strangers, is courteous and considerate. Nowhere have I seen politeness better evinced than in and about the House. But, unintentionally, there is in one respect a want of consideration. A habit has existed, and seems to grow, of carrying on *sotto voce* conversations while Members are speaking, whereby the effect of the strongest and clearest voice is impaired. This is baneful at moments when the precise words of Ministers need to be heard. On the other hand, as our debates are real discussions, almost every speech consists of allusions to other speeches. The Member, thus alluded to, will constantly rise to explain what he had said or what he had meant. While he is so doing, the orator momentarily resumes his seat by courtesy. The mutual generosity, thus invariably shewn to each other by opponents, is such as I have never seen equalled in any other assembly.

The proceedings of the House are daily opened with Prayers in a prescribed form, read by the Speaker's Chaplain. The attendance varies, but

on important days it is large. The demeanour of the Members is entirely reverent as that of a congregation in Church. The tranquil solemnity of the scene strikes the imagination of those who cannot avoid the thought of the fierce war of words that will within an hour be raging in that very Chamber.

The fountain of Order is the Chair of course, that is the Speaker. He has no power over the House of which he is the chief executive, but by the nature of his delegated authority he has virtually the control over any individual Member. It is the anxious wish of all Parties to support the Speaker, who must, no doubt, be desirous by rigid impartiality to deserve the confidence of every Party. This result has been absolutely attained during the time of which I have cognizance. It would be superfluous to dilate on the noble manner in which the arduous and delicate duties of the Chair have been performed. Similarly, the Chairmanship of the Committee of the whole House has been admirably filled during the same space of time by one of the best informed, the most intellectual and philosophic politicians of the day. During the enforced absence of the Speaker from indisposition or other cause, he

has filled the Speaker's Chair with full efficiency. For all that, the constitution of this most important Chairmanship is not wholly satisfactory. The Chairman presides over the House itself while it is in Committee, and rules all points of Order absolutely. With him rests the power of withholding or allowing the closure. In event of disorder or disobedience he exercises a summary jurisdiction under the Rules against the offending Member; though in the graver conjunctures it is usual or necessary to call in the Speaker. Efforts have sometimes been made to indirectly appeal from the Chairman to the Speaker, but the Speaker has expressly disowned any appellate function. Thus the Chairman is in place of the Speaker while the House is in Committee, and his functions are, for the nonce, substantially the same as those of the Speaker. Now the House is in Committee during important portions of every Session. When the Budget is introduced, when the supplies of money are voted to the Crown, when Bills of the very first rank are being passed through the Committee stage, the Chairman is the president. Into the proceedings of Supply all the burning questions of policy are imported on the old maxim of "Grievances before

Supply." While Bills interesting and important, but not contentious, are referred to Grand Committees, and so by devolution escape the Committee stage of the whole House—Bills of a severely contentious character must be referred to the Committee of the whole House, and it is then that the ability of the Chairman will be most sorely tried. Amendments upon an amendment are moved, and complex situations are brought about, demanding intimate knowledge of the Bill itself, and of all that can be brought to bear upon it. Respecting the fate of such a Bill the conduct of the Chairman is as important as that of the Speaker. One or more of such Bills are brought forward every Session, and in reference to them the Chairman has to sit for as many hours as the Speaker, and has as hard work to do. In other respects the work of the Speaker is more arduous, and his responsibility is higher. But there is dissimilarity in the mode of election and the status of the two functionaries. The Speaker is elected by the whole House and by pre-arrangement among the component Parties. The proposer rises from one side, the seconder from the other side. The confirmation by the House is usually unanimous.

When elected, the Speaker lives apart in his official residence, sits aloft as a judge in the assembly, does not mix or associate with other Members in the House. Though he must be returned by his constituents for one Party or the other, he is usually excused from saying much that is specific on current politics. While occupying the Speakership he is not regarded as a unit of any Party in the House, neither does he take part in any division. *Per contra*, the Chairman of Committees is chosen by the Prime Minister, is voted into the chair by the Ministerial majority, continues to be a Party politician, leads much the same life as other Members, addresses the House like any one else when the Speaker is in the Chair, and appears in the division lobby to vote, when he does not happen to be in the Chair. In all this there is something which unavoidably detracts from the position which the Chairman necessarily occupies.

The Table, on which lie the historic Mace and the official boxes, proverbially thumped by Ministers and ex-Ministers in the course of their speeches, is a standing institution. For at one end of it nearest the Chair sit the three Clerks of the House. The

Chief Clerk is the first officer of the House, and is a person of the highest consideration. The two others are also highly placed officers. They are brought into constant relations with the Members, and are infinitely useful in advising individuals as to what can or cannot be attempted under the rules. Their exact knowledge, their unvarying courtesy, their impartial willingness to help all sides alike, and the trust with which their opinions are regarded by Members, must greatly conduce to the regularity of proceedings in the House. The number and variety of notices that have to be printed, with due regard to the claims of priority amidst the incessant competition between the Members, are endless. This work is marvellously well done under the Clerks at the Table; and the efficiency beginning there spreads to all the subordinate establishments.

The Reporters' Gallery in the House is advantageously placed and is understood to be convenient for the journalistic fraternity. Chosen representatives of the Press have access to the lobby of the House under arrangements made by the Serjeant-at-Arms, so that they may converse at will with the Members.

The debates are reported carefully under the authority of the House, not indeed verbatim, but at full length. The historic name of Hansard is still preserved, though the business has during recent years changed hands more than once. It is important for Members to correct the proofs of their speeches, because the words that are thus reported may be quoted against them, and Hansard, as a record, is an authority from which no Member ever appeals. All reasonable facilities are given to Members for making such revision, if they choose to take pains in doing so.

Nothing perplexes ordinary Members more than the order in which they are likely to be called, when they desire by speaking to take part in a debate. Party leaders, Front-bench-men generally, persons obviously marked out by circumstances, and new Members rising for the first time, have no difficulty in being called. For all others there is much uncertainty. In every important debate, perhaps in most debates, several Members rise at once on each side of the House. The Speaker must choose one or other of them, and call the man so chosen. This is the process which used to be phrased as "catching the Speaker's eye." It

necessarily follows that there must be much disappointment. It sometimes happens that a Member may rise time after time, night after night, till his heart grows sick, and yet he is not called. He sees man after man, with less claims than himself, called before him, and he naturally wonders. On the other hand, the position of the Speaker must be difficult, inasmuch as he has to balance many considerations unknown to Members generally. He is probably the only man who knows every Member of the House, and he must always have some reasons in his own mind. The House, though never seeking to enter into the reasons, accepts his conclusion. He is the Speaker for all the Members—not for the best men only, but for the whole body. It does not follow that the ablest men or the most experienced are called first by him. The House contains Members juvenile and aged, famous and unknown, able and insignificant, potent and feeble—he must be Speaker for them all alike—and for voting in the division lobby, there is equality between them all. To each one of them in turn, sooner or later, he will impartially afford a chance of being heard, if time shall permit. But if by ill-luck a man happens to rise often before he is called, the mental process

must be distressing in the extreme. He has a speech in his head, but it is modified again and again by other speeches. His faculties will be strung up to the point of preparation, and will then be suddenly relaxed. Once more for him the tension will be restored, but again there will be collapse. The repetition of the process must make his brain reel, and rack his aching head. When at last he is called to speak, his performance will lose half the verve it would have had at first. To crown all, there is something of the ridiculous in the whole affair, so the sufferer will never confess his sufferings.

There is probably no discipline anywhere like that of the House for sharpening the perceptive powers. Despite the protracted delays in many passages, yet the several steps and stages under the Rules will pass off with instantaneous rapidity. Once the magic words have been uttered from the Chair, there is no going back. There is always a Party, or an individual, acutely interested in fixing all the rigidity that the Procedure may allow. Consequently the Member concerned must rise, move, speak, object, support, at the right moment. One moment only of remissness might lose everything or

spoil the case. It is especially in the first half hour after midnight that the Member must keep both eye and ear intent on his cases with a truly cat-like watchfulness.

Mutual forbearance between Parties is not always preserved. But good-humoured forbearance on the part of one Member towards others is essential to his success. Bad temper is fatal to him who shows it; indeed, it would pull down even the most powerful Minister. Lord Beaconsfield (then Mr. Disraeli) once told me that in Parliament a man must, above all things, be forbearing.

In the inner working of the House, there are few subjects so hard to understand as that of the relations between the Ministers who occupy the Front Bench and their followers who sit behind them—whether they belong to the Conservative or to the Liberal Party. It might at the first blush be supposed that, like as any successful civil governor or military commander usually cultivates the acquaintance of his officers and of others whom he has to guide—so a Parliamentary Leader would take care to be on similar terms with his followers. Such, however, does not seem to be the case with any Party in the House of Commons. Probably the

indirect sounding of the opinions of Members is a task entrusted to the Whips. But this could be far better done by a Minister gifted with insight, who, by some confidential conversation here and there, might divine the thoughts of his followers. If this is done less than it might be, the cause, perhaps, arises from a certain awkwardness which Ministers feel, because their men, though in one sense followers, are in another sense masters. This too, is apart from the Party meetings, which are more public than confidential, and are in some degree rehearsals of the parts which are shortly to be acted in the House itself.

During the years under review no word has been so widely current as "Obstruction." The word is necessarily indefinite, and its meaning is imperfectly appreciated. It represents a means of opposing, but is different from opposition proper. Nevertheless it is often confounded with opposition. The boundary-line between the two things is indistinct. Sometimes the one merges into the other, and it becomes difficult to decide where opposition ends and obstruction begins, or *vice versa*. The financial business of the year must be done within the year; the Bills must become

law within the Session or else be dropped. Therefore time proves to be an element in opposition. In Parliament the breath of life is discussion ; and the opponents of a measure have a right to discuss it with reasonable fulness. If they can thus drive it across the limits of time, they ensure its defeat. The tactics, which are applicable to a single measure, may be applied to a group of measures or to a whole policy. It is the reasonableness or unreasonableness of the discussion that mainly, if not entirely, constitutes the difference between opposition and obstruction. Very often an earnest and sincere opposition is called obstruction by those who suffer from it. During the years under review, from our Conservative point of vision, we ourselves perhaps mistook for obstruction that which really was a strenuous resistance which our opponents had a right to offer if they could do so successfully. But after allowance had been made for this, there certainly remained much that was barefaced and undisguised obstruction. Countless speeches were delivered, endless motions were made, with the evident purpose of taking up so many hours. In such cases there was no direct, but only an indirect opposition

by the consumption of time in a manner quite transparent.

This is one of the several reasons why a Ministry must have, so to speak, a Parliamentary body-guard, consisting of seventy to a hundred Members—besides its own Front-bench-men, about thirty in number—who can be depended upon to be within instant call at all hours. I enrolled myself in this category, and therefore knew what the exigency was. Without such a trusty band, even a strong Ministry, with a large majority for all important divisions, would be driven to undignified straits in lesser divisions, or to make ignoble concessions. The organization of such a body of thorough-going supporters is essential to efficiency and stability in Parliamentary Government.

Supply, technically so termed, has a foremost place in the business of the House. No word is more current on the lips of Members than this. It means the voting of supplies of money to the Crown for the public service. When the House is engaged in this, it is said to be in Committee of Supply, or in Supply. This is the primary function of the Commons, and the business occupies about one-fourth of the time of the Session. The mediæval

doctrine of grievances before Supply is fully allowed up to the present time. Discussion is raised before the Speaker leaves the Chair in order that the House may enter on Supply, also when Votes on Account are asked for, and again before the Vote is taken for the money under each head of service.

We have two phrases which closely concern our life in Parliament; these are "the Private Members" and "the time of the House." By Private Members are meant, strictly, all those who are not in Office at the time, or who do not sit on the Treasury Bench. But in common acceptation those who have been in office, and are sitting on the Front Opposition Bench, will be included in the official category. For "the time of the House" the following are the divisions. Mondays and Thursdays are allotted for the business of the Government of the day. But Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays remain for the business of Private Members, unless the House shall otherwise order. It is alleged that in former days the House seldom ordered this until the last weeks of the Session, and that Private Members were able to get Bills passed, or Resolutions carried that bore good fruit. But of late the House has been constantly ordering

otherwise, at the instance of the Government of the day. In other words, the Government has fallen into the habit of inducing the House to pass Resolutions taking up for Government business a part or the whole of the time belonging to Private Members. But in previous times, as I understand, and certainly during the time under review, this has been done under certain limitations and conditions, that is for certain Bills or certain other measures, or for some specified arrangement of business — the Opposition always evincing a just jealousy on such points.* At the beginning of a Session, the Private Members are allowed to avail themselves of their days in every week, and so to do a little good for any beneficent cause entrusted to them. But soon the Ministerial bark becomes waterlogged. Thus more time is imperatively needed, and that is taken by political robbery from the Private Members. The robbery is so unblushingly practised by each Party when in power that it has come to be regarded as a *fraus pia*. It is the consequence of the obstructive arts being so largely developed,

* A fresh precedent has been set in this respect during 1893, on which I refrain from commenting, as it does not fall within my present survey.

and of the growing demands on every Government to carry large measures of legislation—for all which the ordinary Session hardly affords time.

Simultaneously the growth of political thought, in the country at large, causes many more projects of law to be devised nowadays than formerly by individuals, by corporations, or by other bodies. These are entrusted to Private Members, and in consequence the number of such Bills presented at the opening of each Session ranges from two to four hundred—probably three hundred may be taken as an average. Consequently the obligations of Private Members in this respect have increased, while their chances of fulfilling the same have decreased.

The priority of days for the Bills of Private Members, and the preference of places on the day chosen, must be settled by ballot. The principal ballot takes place at the beginning of the Session; and as the number of Bills nowadays amounts to several hundreds, the process is most tedious and irksome to those Members engaged. For nine-tenths of these Members the ennui and fatigue is all in vain, and their only consolation is the thought that this is endured for the sake of those whom they represent. On this occasion the days sought

for are the Wednesdays. But a weekly ballot takes place for Resolutions; and for this purpose the Tuesdays are sought for, and more particularly the Fridays, because the Government, when disposed to victimize, will take the Tuesdays first and spare the Fridays for a while. The Wednesdays are the days which the ogre eats up last.

The ballot is considered by many to be an unsatisfactory procedure; unimportant Bills exclude important Bills; uninteresting Resolutions exclude interesting Resolutions, and so forth. No remedy has yet been devised, nor any means found whereby the general sense of the House can be obtained for giving preference or precedence to certain Bills and certain Resolutions over others. In practice, however, a preference is indirectly obtained for particular Bills or particular Resolutions which find favour with a considerable number of Members—in this wise. Many Members agree among themselves to ballot for a particular Bill or Resolution. Some one or other among them all will be fortunate, and so the winner chooses an auspicious day. Nevertheless, there is a consensus among thoughtful Members that the Rules ought somehow to be re-arranged. But in the stress of

other affairs, no person of the requisite competence and authority has been able to take the question up.

It is chiefly in reference to the work of Private Members that the process known as "a Count-out" comes into play. If at any moment few Members are in the Chamber, one Member may draw the Speaker's notice to the fact that forty Members are not present. A count is then notified by electric bell throughout the House and its precincts. After the lapse of three minutes it is actually taken. If forty are not then found to be in the Chamber, the House is adjourned, that is, "counted out." Just after the dinner hour a count is frequently moved by the Opposition, but a sufficient number of Ministerialists rush from the dinner tables to the Chamber, and so a "Count-out" is averted. During the several years under our survey we well knew that if the Government should be "counted out," that would be considered blame-worthy, and as a slip or *lâche* on the part of our men. But a Private Member may have his Bill or his Resolution coming forward on the night of a Tuesday or Friday at nine o'clock. This happens when the Government has taken up the first half of the day by what are called

morning sittings, from two to seven o'clock; after which the sitting is suspended till nine o'clock. The Private Member must then depend on the three hours from nine to midnight for his discussion. Now the Government may not be interested in preventing a "Count-out" at this time, or may even indirectly be encouraging it. Or still worse, some opponents may be actively promoting it, as the shortest and surest means of frustrating the measure. Thus the Private Member in charge must gather his friends together punctually at nine, to guard against a "Count-out": and sometimes he succeeds. But not unfrequently he fails, or just misses the obtaining of the required quorum. The fact of such "Counts-out" periodically occurring, is regarded by many as a proof that Private Members can rarely obtain sufficient co-operation from their comrades or fellows to ensure the passing of any measure.

The Private Members, however, being shut out in many ways from the display of individuality or originality, take every chance they can of asserting themselves in other ways, like Supply for instance. One favourite way is that of interpellation of the Ministers by Questions. After the despatch of

Private Bills—for railways, canals, and so forth—the Questions come on before the beginning of Public Business. These Questions are usually printed in the Notice Paper beforehand; still they may be asked verbally with or without notice. They range perhaps from forty to seventy in a day, and occupy about an hour of the best time in the afternoon. Their scope is practically boundless; they afford the means of controlling the national and imperial administration; they serve for the ventilation of individual grievances; and they often excite interest outside the House.

This description of the House as a place of business, leads me to touch upon the supplementary work done in its precincts. When a Member is said to be busy upstairs, that phrase has a significance which will now be explained. From the Central Hall he ascends a great stone staircase, open at most hours to the public, and leading to a corridor of great length, nearly as long as the Terrace. This corridor extends immediately behind the fine suite of Committee Rooms, which are immediately over the Dining-rooms and the Library, overlooking the Thames. From noon till late in the afternoon on most days during several weeks in

the midst of the Session, the corridor is alive with people and crowded by Barristers and Leaders of the Parliamentary Bar, by Solicitors and Agents, by promoters and opponents, by Directors and expert witnesses. This mixed multitude is constantly moving in and out of the rooms where the several Committees are sitting. These Committees are dealing with the Bills, referred to them by the House, regarding works of material improvement, railways, canals, waterworks, docks, harbours, and the like. Before them counsel are pleading, witnesses deposing, agents striving for or against the Bills. The Members serving are nominated by a Committee of Selection appointed by the House at the beginning of every Session, and their attendance is obligatory. The number on each Committee is four, and the Chairman has a casting vote. Owing to the intricacy of the issues, the magnitude of the interests, the eminence of the Counsel, and the repute of the witnesses, these cases demand the close attention of the Committee, and the Chairman especially has work as hard as that of a Judge on the Bench. The Committees pass, or reject, or amend the Bills without giving reasons. Besides these, there are

Select Committees appointed by the House to investigate subjects of public importance, the questions generally being complex as well as large. They sit also from a little before noon to late in the afternoon. The number of Members ranges usually from 9 to 17 or more, and the attendance is not obligatory. Witnesses are called, but Counsel do not plead. The enquiries are searching, because the Members serve voluntarily, as taking an interest in the subject. The Report is of the same character, and the draft of it has as a rule to be prepared by the Chairman. To many industrious men the work of such a Committee has proved almost exhausting. Yet further, there are the Standing Committees on Law and Trade, commonly called the Grand Committees. These have from 50 to 70 Members, representing the several sections of the House; indeed, they are said to be the House in miniature. Some of the Cabinet Ministers usually sit on them. Various Bills are referred to them by the House for the Committee stage by the process of devolution. They divide on disputed points, and their divisions are recorded. Lastly, there is the Committee on Public Accounts, which sits every Wednesday after-

noon. The Auditor-General for all Departments, Civil and Military, is an officer of the House of Commons, and makes yearly to the House a report of the irregularities he has discovered in the accounts of all Departments. The House being unable to deal with all these particulars, deutes the task to a select body of its own Members, called the Committee of Public Accounts. This investigates each irregularity in the presence of the departmental officials concerned, and of the Auditor-General. Before the end of the Session it presents its Report to the House, which as a rule is held to be binding on all concerned.

Naturally some Members serve on one category of these Committees and some on another. I happen to have served on all these categories in the same Session, and many of my comrades have doubtless done the same. The work, though not showy, and counting for little in common fame, is of practical consequence. The Committee Rooms are fine and handsome indeed; but they have defects which aggravate the fatigue of those who are employed in them. Anyone who has really worked there for five hours, walks downstairs to his place in the House with a sense of physical

and mental fatigue, but also with a consciousness of having learnt much that is worth knowing.

This summary may be concluded with a brief mention of the Whips. The name Whip is applied to the notice which is sent daily to nearly every Member during the Session, underlined more or less, according to urgency. A five-lined Whip is accepted by all Parties as indicating the most imperative request. The name also refers to those Members who are employed to keep their men together, and to act figuratively as whippers-in. Sometimes a Member, of mind self-contained, leaves one Party without joining the other, and receives a Whip from neither. He is jocularly said to lead a whip-less existence! Of the two senior Whips, who act for their Party as Tellers in Division, the principal is the Patronage Secretary to the Treasury, and his co-teller is among the Lords of the Treasury while their Party is in Office. As a rule there will be two or more assistant Whips. The principal of the two senior Whips is a very influential person, and deep in the counsels of his Party. No doubt his duties demand patience, temper, tact, skill, readiness, all in the highest degree. He confers with the Leader the last thing

at night as to the terms in which the Whip notice of the following day shall be issued. Among his assistants there will be a Whip usually chosen by reason of high social status, who possibly holds one of the Household Offices when his Party is in Office, and one of whose daily duties it is to ascertain which Member can or cannot be depended upon to dine in the House that evening—inasmuch as the precarious attendance at the dinner-hour is an abiding source of anxiety or peril. •

Among the duties of a Whip is the arrangement of the “pairing,” though Members may also settle the “pairs” among themselves. . This practice, whereby two Members of opposite sides agree to be absent for a given time, is not officially recognised by the House. It is a matter merely of courtesy between Members, but its conditions as concerning honour are rigidly observed. Near the door of the House lies an open book in which are recorded the names of the pairs. As I never pair myself, my acquaintance with the subject may be doubted, but hearsay evidence is superabundant. Pairs are formed for the dinner-hour most commonly, for the whole evening^o also—sometimes too for a particular day, or for a specified time. About July

pairing begins for the rest of the Session, and this is regarded with dread and detestation by Whips and Leaders who fear being left short of men. If by reason of pairing the voting strength should drop below a certain mark, various perils arise, especially as regards the application of closure for which a large quorum is needed. One of the Whips stations himself near the entrance of the lobby to note the incoming and outgoing of those who belong to his Party.

After this review of the House of Commons as a social club and as a place of political business, it remains for me to touch upon the life as lived therein by Members who attend diligently and assiduously. This life may be illustrated by two imaginary instances, one relating to a downright hard day, the other to a comparatively easy day.

On an easy day the Member enters the House at three o'clock, and finds that some Private Bill is coming on, to which he has been asked to attend by those concerned. At half-past three the Questions begin, in none of which has he any particular concern. So he takes that opportunity of shewing some of his constituents or their families over the House, this particular time being favourable for sight-seeing, as many distinguished Members are

moving about, and as the House will be crowded to hear Ministers answer the interpellations. Then he takes his friends to the breezy Terrace for afternoon tea. This done, he returns to his place in the Chamber. He is not going to take part in the debate, to which however he listens with amused interest, voting in the lesser Divisions from time to time, till the dinner hour, when he joins a small party which one of his colleagues is giving in a room off the Terrace. Midway in dinner the electric Bell summons him to a "Count," for which he must rush to the Chamber (if his Party be in Office), lest it should prove "a Count-out." After this interruption he resumes his dinner, and the brief entertainment over, he returns to his place on the Green Benches by half-past nine, and listens to the debate. Between that hour and midnight he will for a while resort to the upper corridor adjoining the Chamber, and write letters to his political friends. But he can hear all that is passing in the House, so he keeps one ear open in that direction, while his eye is fixed on his paper. At a quarter to twelve he will hear "division! division!" called, and he runs down to the "Aye" or the "No" lobby as the case may be. After midnight the Bills of

Private Members are called, one or other of which he will oppose or support, or he may have one of his own to forward. By half-past twelve he is released for the night, thinking that the House is not an unpleasant place after all !

On a hard day the Member enters the House at eleven in the forenoon, and mounts the great staircase to the room where his Committee sits on a Private Bill for the promotion of some material enterprise. If he happens to be Chairman, he will not be able to keep his eyes and his ears off the case till four in the afternoon—without any interval for refreshment — listening to the pleadings of counsel, the points of order raised by the learned gentlemen, the evidence of promoters and opponents, the opinion of experts and so forth. Then having actually done a day's work, he proceeds to his place in the Chamber, near the end of Question-time, to make some interpellation which stands in his name, and observe the answers given by the Leader of the House to the tormentors on the Opposition side. He then watches the progress of some full-dress debate, rising time after time in his place, and chagrined at finding someone else always called before him. At last, as the hands of the

clock point to eight, he catches the Speaker's eye and is called, and then there is an adjournment for half-an-hour. He cannot, therefore, think of dining, so he takes some light refreshment speedily at the luncheon-bar. He must of course be in his place a few minutes before the time, lest the opportunity so long sought should be lost. At half-past-eight, or thereabouts, he makes his speech, and after nine he has some peace of mind till he finds his speech punished by his opponents. Once or twice he will jump up to explain, with the courteous permission of the House, what he regards as a misrepresentation of what he has said. All this keeps him on the alert till the Division takes place shortly before midnight. After that hour he finds that some educational gentlemen, having a privileged motion to which the midnight rule does not apply, begin a discussion which lasts till say half-past one, when a division takes place, whereon the House adjourns. He then goes home tired in the small hours of the morning, saying to himself,

“ Who would fardels bear
To grunt and sweat under this weary life ? ”

CHAPTER III.

FIRST SESSION OF 1886.

General Election of 1885—Meeting of Parliament, January 12th, 1886—Election of Mr. Peel as Speaker—The Queen's Speech in the Lords—The Address in reply moved in the Commons—The debate on the Address—Mr. Gladstone's attitude—Mr. Parnell and the Nationalists—Amendment carried by Mr. Jesse Collings—Consequent resignation of the Conservative Ministry—Formation of a Government by Mr. Gladstone—Prominent figures from February to April—The Marquess of Hartington independent—Mr. Chamberlain's position—Mr. Gladstone introduces Bill for Home Rule in Ireland April 8th, with First Reading on 14th—Sir William Harcourt's Budget—Mr. Gladstone's Land-Purchase scheme for Ireland—Mr. Chamberlain's opposition—Second Reading of Home Rule Bill moved May 11th and opposed by Lord Hartington—Great debate thereon—Liberal Unionists organized—Second Reading rejected June 7th—Dissolution of Parliament, 25th.

IN the narrative on which we now enter I ask leave to assume that the reader will, from the foregoing chapter, have gathered the meaning of Parliamentary terms which are familiar and in a certain sense technical, so that no further explanation of them will be needed as the story proceeds.

Further, the reader may notice a certain particularity regarding dates in each Session, and a special advertence to Easter and Whitsuntide as

landmarks in the sand of Parliamentary time. The reason is this, that the work of Supply and of legislation must be completed within the Session, and cannot be carried on to another Session for completion. Thus time becomes a matter of the very first consideration, never absent from the mind of the House. Practically Easter and Whitsuntide are like the turning-points in a course. After Whitsuntide there is a straight run towards the finish or the close of the Session, and this run, unhappily for us Members, has proved to be of variable length. The days of the week, too, will often be given, because of the distinction between what are called Government nights and Private Members' nights. Monday, though a Government day, is not favourably regarded by Ministerialists, because of the fear lest their men who had left London on the Saturday should not have returned in time.

Moreover, it may be borne in mind that, besides Parliamentary duties, I always had work on the School Board for London, of which I was the financial Member. In the very rare cases where I missed a division in the House, the cause would be that I had conflicting avocations in the House and

on the Board simultaneously. On the Thursday afternoons when the Board had its weekly meetings, I used to be hurrying backwards and forwards between the two places. Fortunately the familiar road ran along the Victoria Embankment, commanding one of the finest urban views in Europe.

The General Election of 1885 had taken place under a Conservative Government, the Marquess of Salisbury being Prime Minister, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach being Leader of the House of Commons, and Mr. Gladstone the head of the Liberal Opposition. In Great Britain the Elections had not gone satisfactorily or conclusively either for the Conservatives or for the Liberals. The balance was held by the Irish or Nationalist Party, and they had apparently sided with the Conservatives rather than the Liberals; but their attitude was very dubious. The electoral result was not fully known till the middle of December, 1885, and the Government, being doubtful of its position, assembled Parliament soon afterwards, in order to test whether it possessed the confidence of the new House of Commons.

Tuesday, January the 12th, 1886, was a day memorable in my life, for it was then that I entered the House of Commons for the first time as

a Member. The weather was wintry, with leaden hues and forbidding aspect. I gave my name to the policeman who acted as janitor, passed through the Members' entrance, ascended the beautiful staircase and entered the lobby or vestibule of the House, then fast filling with Members. Greetings were cordially exchanged between us, and we recounted to mutually sympathetic ears our electioneering adventures as we moved on to the interior of the Chamber itself, in which the Members of the newly elected Parliament were fast gathering.

I had now done that which every active Englishman should be ambitious of doing if he can. I had, further, been returned for the Southern or Evesham division of Worcestershire, my native county. This too seemed a fitting complement to the career I had run in countries beyond the seas. Nevertheless I did not feel elated, but rather the reverse. For the shadow of anxious doubt overhung me and my comrades. The Irish question loomed darkly before us, and a project of Home Rule was in the air. Looking back on the unexampled labour borne by us during the elections just over, we feared that the ordeal would soon have to be under-

gone over again. We hardly liked to formulate the reasons for the apprehensions which beset us. It could only have been the unexpressed anticipation of what actually happened, namely, the speedy defeat of our Party and Government by Mr. Gladstone, the introduction by him of a Home Rule measure, his defeat in turn, and the consequent appeal to the people by another General Election.

The Black Rod, Admiral the Hon. Sir James Drummond knocked, according to ancient custom, at our door ; and, entering, summoned us to appear at the Bar of the House of Lords. This we did in a closely-packed procession, and received from a Commission of three Peers in their red robes, the Royal commands to elect a Speaker. Thereon we returned to our own House.

At two o'clock the Chief Clerk of the House, Sir Erskine May (the Parliamentary historian, afterwards Lord Farnborough) took his seat at the Table. Then on our side Sir John Mowbray rose, a Nestor in the House and Member for the University of Oxford. Addressing Sir Erskine May, he proposed the election of Mr. Arthur Wellesley Peel as Speaker. The proposal was seconded by Mr. John Bright from the Opposition or Liberal side.

This was the first and the last time that I heard him within the Chamber of the Commons. His voice had become feeble from illness ; but I well recollect the impressive manner in which he spoke of Mr. Peel's inflexible impartiality. So far there was unanimity, but then Mr. Justin M'Carthy rose, somewhat ungraciously, to say that he and his Irish friends, though not objecting to the re-election of Mr. Peel, could hardly share in "the unmitigated eulogy" that had been passed. Mr. Peel rose from the Liberal benches to reply, and I heard for the first time that sonorous yet graceful voice, destined thereafter to become familiar to my ears. He was then conducted by the Mover and Secunder to the Chair, which is like a throne, and, standing on the steps, he returned his thanks to the House. Congratulations were offered by Sir Michael Hicks-Beach as Leader of the House, and by Mr. Gladstone as Leader of the Opposition. We then adjourned till the following day, when the swearing-in of Members would begin.

We met again accordingly and went in procession, headed by the Speaker, to the Bar of the Lords, and heard Mr. Peel there announce his election as Speaker, submit himself for the appro-

bation of the Queen, and claim the privileges of the Commons. We then returned to our own House to be sworn in.

Before meeting that day we Conservatives had received a Whip, urging us to be in our places. The reason proved to be this: that the Government intended to raise the question whether Mr. Bradlaugh—who had not been allowed to take the oath in the last Parliament—should now be permitted to advance to the Table and take the oath until, the Members having been sworn, the new House had been constituted and could decide the point. But on the reference being made by Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, the Speaker decided that Mr. Bradlaugh could not be prevented from taking the oath at once. The swearing-in then proceeded in a hurried and undignified manner, simply because everyone wished to be sworn at once and depart, while the means of swearing-in, Clerks and Tables, were quite insufficient. Even then a delay of several days was allowed for this process, which, with good management, need not have taken more than two days. It was not till Thursday, the 21st, that Parliament reassembled for business. This seemed an unaccountable waste of time.

The Royal Speech was to be read from the Throne by the Queen in person. Consequently great pressure and excitement prevailed in and about the Houses of Parliament, despite the wintry snow. The Commons swarmed in a crush at the Bar of the Lords behind their Speaker. To spectators the scene must have appeared disorderly, and unworthy of so great an institution as that of the Commons. The simple cause was the utter insufficiency of space. Why the Commons should be summoned before the Sovereign and the Lords to hear the Royal Message read, and then not be allowed bare standing-room, is one of those questions to which no reasonable answer can be found. I managed, however, to hear Her Majesty read the Gracious Speech, and to witness the imposing spectacle — the superb Chamber, the robes, the Peers, the galaxy in the Peeresses' Gallery. We listened anxiously to the words regarding the Union of Great Britain and Ireland.

Returning to our own House we heard a number of formal motions made from the Chair, and various notices regarding seats and elections in Ireland, and I observed for the first time the Nationalist Members from Ireland, who were now full eighty

strong and occupied one-quarter of the House, that is the space below the Gangway, on the left of the Chair. Every time an Irish constituency happened to be merely mentioned, their ringing cheers made the roof of the Chamber re-echo. Then the formal Address in response to the Speech from the Throne was moved and seconded by Lord Curzon, in uniform, and Mr. (now Sir William) Houldsworth, in Court dress.

Next it was Mr. Gladstone's turn to speak. I had understood privately that he was going to make some announcement that would imply his resignation of the Liberal Leadership. He was known to be disappointed at his failure to obtain a majority at the General Election. He was believed to be personally a convert to Home Rule for Ireland, but unable to induce his colleagues and his Party to agree with him, while he was hopeful that the Conservatives would propose some measure of that nature. His resignation at this juncture would leave the Liberals without any reason for acceding to Home Rule. In fact, however, he said nothing to imply resignation, but on the contrary was evidently prepared to oppose the Government, and challenge them to produce a measure in

favour of Ireland if they had one. I inferred that after all he had found most of his colleagues, and the mass of his Party, more ready than he had at first supposed to follow him in the path of Home Rule—excepting two, namely, Lord Hartington and Mr. Goschen, with possibly a small but influential following. On the other hand he apparently perceived that the Conservatives would not enter on such a path. Hence, as I supposed, his unaltered attitude as Leader of the Opposition.

It was in this speech that, alluding to his reserve on the question on Home Rule until the fit moment for action should arrive, he described himself as an old Parliamentary hand. He had long been a coiner of phrases that have become household words in Parliament, and this description became proverbial among us.

Thus the time passed till the dinner-hour, when the crowded House suddenly emptied, as water runs out of a sieve. Later in the evening (at the suggestion of the Whip), I rose to make my maiden speech on one of the many topics included in the Speech and the Address. The topic I selected was that of the annexation of Burma, with which country I personally had special acquaintance. I

seemed to pass through the proverbial ordeal satisfactorily, and rejoiced to have it over on this the very earliest opportunity.

Resuming my seat I saw a bearded and handsome Member rise from the Irish Benches. So for the first time I beheld Mr. Parnell. He might have sounded the war-trumpet ; but no, not yet. On the contrary he surprised us by the guarded moderation of his thought and language, and left the temper and disposition of the Nationalist Party in doubt.

Lord Randolph Churchill, however, declared on behalf of the Government that Home Rule was impossible. We rejoiced to hear this declaration, though we well knew what it portended.

The next day, Friday the 22nd, I heard Mr. Sexton, the Nationalist orator, for the first time. His speech was very effective, owing to attractive presence, fluency of diction and array of argument. But it cast away the veil that might have been left, and disclosed absolute hostility to the Conservative policy as embodied in the Speech and the proposed Address. This naturally followed upon Lord Randolph Churchill's unequivocal declaration of the previous night.

On the following Monday, the 25th, we met to

continue the miscellaneous debate on the Address, but in grim expectation of a Ministerial crisis. The only chance, we thought, was to gain time, so as to propose vigorous measures for preserving order in Ireland, and thus to conciliate some manly and patriotic Liberals, in which case they might possibly join forces with us. But somehow little was done towards this end. A discussion on Burma was begun, and might reasonably have been prolonged, but was allowed to be cut short. A similar fate befell an academic discussion on agriculture. The next day the Liberals were known to have received a special Whip, whence we sniffed danger. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, evidently desirous of losing no time, announced several strong measures regarding Ireland to be proposed on the following Thursday, wondering perhaps whether he would live politically long enough to propose them. The rage of the Nationalist Irish, on hearing this announcement, was amusing to behold. Now Mr. Jesse Collings had a hostile motion (that is, an amendment to the Address) regarding Small Holdings on the notice-paper. This would be a capital stick wherewith to beat us to death. As a matter of tactics it was desirable for us to prevent the

motion coming on till Thursday at all events, so that Government might present their Irish measures. This was, however, not done; Mr. Jesse Collings' motion came on, and Mr. Gladstone at once declared for it. Inasmuch as, with the Liberals still undivided, and with the Nationalists ranged with him against us, he would command a decisive majority, his declaration meant defeat for us that very night. The division took place soon after midnight, and on hearing the numbers announced the Irish Nationalists rent the air with exultant cries of "no coercion!" Then Sir Michael Hicks-Beach moved the adjournment of the House in order that Ministers might consider their position. This meant that the Government was out, in popular phrase, and enabled the Nationalists to say that the Minister who had announced coercion in the beginning of the day's sitting was out of office by the end of it.

During these discussions both the Marquess of Hartington and Mr. Goschen spoke out manfully on our side. Sir Henry James, Mr. Leonard Courtney and Sir John Lubbock, all eminent Liberals, were favourable to us. Especially was Lord Hartington's bearing admired by the Con-

servatives, who received him with friendly greeting and hearty cheers. We grieved however to see that, though he himself voted with us, he carried at that time only some followers, few in number, but personally eminent. At this juncture Mr. Joseph Chamberlain remained in outward agreement with Mr. Gladstone.

On Monday, the 1st of February, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach announced the resignation of Ministers, and we separated for a while till a new Government under Mr. Gladstone could be formed. By Thursday the 18th the new Ministers, having obtained the necessary re-election after accepting office, took their seats. There was much oratorical sparring and skirmishing that night, amidst which a stirring speech on the Ulster side was made by Colonel Saunderson, an orator with whom we were destined to become happily familiar. The Address in response to the Speech had to be settled as a necessary preliminary. The next day Mr. Leonard Courtney, on Mr. Gladstone's motion, was moved into the chair of the Committee of the whole House, a position which he subsequently held for several years with honour and usefulness. Then we straightway began to vote supplies of money to

Her Majesty for the various branches of the public service.

I have narrated the events of my first month in Parliament because they were eventful, and comprised the pulling down of one Ministry and setting up of another. But from the 18th of February, when Mr. Gladstone took up the reins in the House, to the 8th of April, when he introduced his first Home Rule Bill, the seven weeks may be described in general terms only.

During this interval the salient feature was the impressive personality of Mr. Gladstone himself, who was quite the figure-head in this Parliament. Naturally he was no longer the handsome man with a beautiful voice who had been wont to charm a listening Senate. But still his aspect was nobly picturesque, and when under excitement, he was grandly leonine. Advanced age had left its traces on him outwardly, and had impaired his matchless powers of elocution. The once resonant voice often would become husky, and at times almost inaudible, so that his oratory sank and fell with a cadence like the wind. But his persuasiveness for many minds remained in its highest degree. His impassioned gesture seemed to be quite un-

impaired ; it could not conceivably have ever been finer than it was in these days. When excited in speech he would swing his arm round like the sweep of a scimitar, and yet with a movement both graceful and appropriate. His hands, too, were most expressive, and by their motion or action helped him to enforce his arguments. Above all, there was the play of features in the care-worn countenance. Evidently he was in the highest sense of the term one of Nature's actors. It would be no disparagement of him to say that had he by accident of birth or fortune betaken himself to the stage, he would have been one of the greatest tragedians of modern times. As it was, I often saw him do perfectly well and without premeditation, as if by intuition, that which professional actors accomplish after long study, and then perhaps but imperfectly. The quality of his speeches was not quite what it once had been in all respects. The passion, the glow, the sympathy, the magnetism (to borrow an American phrase), remained as of yore. The poetic, pathetic, romantic passages in his oratory were still lovely—they could hardly have been lovelier even in the heyday of his career. But the power of marshalling a long array of facts

and figures, of sustaining a lengthened argument analytically and synthetically—though still great—was not what it must have been in his palmiest days.

On the Front Bench the second in command was Sir William Harcourt, the Chancellor of the Exchequer. On him, indeed, the duties of Leadership often devolved, which he discharged with all the ability of a highly accomplished man, and with full insight into Parliamentary tactics. In the main, however, he was the satirist on behalf of his Party; in classical times he might have been called the athlete, the pugilist, even the gladiator, of debate. His blows against us were usually dealt from the platforms outside. But it was from the Treasury Bench that the vials of his satire were poured over us. He relied more on this element than upon solid argument; but his wit was regarded by us as somewhat elephantine. He gave us the impression of an advocate speaking from a brief. But in matters not connected with Party politics he shewed judgment and moderation.

At this juncture, however, the really important man was Mr. John Morley, who, to the surprise of many, had been chosen to be Chief Secretary for Ireland. The reason for the choice, doubtless, was

that he had been almost, if not quite, the only Liberal politician who before 1885, and during that year, had consistently declared for Home Rule when it seemed to be finding favour nowhere in Britain. While we regarded the other Ministers as new converts, we respected him as one who was following in office that which he had advocated out of office. His literary repute was thoroughly appreciated on both sides of the House. He was known to be an excellent speaker on the platforms outside, and the framer of many phrases that became household words in politics. But his official promotion had been like a great leap and bound, so he had yet to be tried as a Minister in Parliament, and his mettle was immediately tested by the heckling and cross-questioning which are directed against every Irish Secretary by the Nationalist Members.

The stability of the Ministry largely depended on the alliance with the Parnellite or Nationalist Party, about eighty strong. Mr. Parnell's headship seemed to be as implicitly acknowledged by the Nationalist Members as it certainly was by a large section of the Irish people. He was understood to be a strict disciplinarian in the management of his

Party. His health at this time was good; his aspect, though changed from the former type, was still striking, handsome and dignified. He was, indeed, one of the best looking men in the House, and one of its most effective orators. His oratory was generally calm and measured, with indications of much force in reserve. But he could, at will, throw fearful energy into his tones, and then his diction would become most incisive and impressive. In our eyes the principal passages would be usually marred by menacing sarcasm and cynical invective. Of his henchmen, Mr. Sexton, Mr. Timothy Healy, Mr. Dillon, Mr. William O'Brien, and Mr. T. P. O'Connor, we had, as yet, no means for judging.

On our side the Leader of the Opposition was Sir Michael Hicks-Beach. In figure, mien and aspect he had every external advantage for this position, to which he brought both official ability and Parliamentary experience. He was just one of those Englishmen who are equal to fortune, and who rise the higher the more severely they are tried. The really masterful person on our Front Bench however was Lord Randolph Churchill, who was fast approaching a point of culmination. As Secretary of State for India he had won the favourable

opinion of experts; having shown patience in study, readiness to learn, deference to the opinion of seniors. In the annexation of Upper Burma, on the other hand, he had shown energetic promptitude at a critical moment. In current British politics, in resistance to the Home Rule movement he was a veritable Rupert, charging furiously against the Radicals and the Nationalists. His brilliant speeches, the very best of their kind in that day on many platforms, had attracted vast multitudes, and were supposed to have largely propagated the Conservative faith among the people of England at least. All this gave him great weight in our Parliamentary counsels.

Among the Liberal Unionists, as they soon became, Mr. Chamberlain had not yet joined our alliance. But Lord Hartington was fully to the front. With us he was both popular and respected in the highest degree. His oratory, though not pretending to be ornate, was yet extremely effective for Parliamentary purposes, and his blows against Home Rule fell with the force and weight of a sledge-hammer. We were proud to find Sir Henry James openly joining this alliance. He was understood to have sacrificed the opportunity of becoming

Lord Chancellor in the Gladstonian Ministry, rather than accept the policy of Home Rule. He held, morally, an exalted rank in our esteem, and he was a tower of strength to our cause.

A Bill for the benefit of crofters in Scotland was ably introduced and piloted by Mr., afterwards Sir George, Trevelyan, as Secretary for Scotland. Otherwise, in respect of general policy, Home Rule was known to be in the air, and this dark cloud hung on our horizon. The Conservative leaders feared lest the idea should, if not controverted from day to day, become familiarized to the British people. On one occasion, therefore, before voting supplies of money, they demanded that Mr. Gladstone should declare some at least of the principles that would guide his forthcoming Irish policy. He successfully parried the demand, and though we believed we had sympathizers in the Liberal ranks, we received no support in the division which ensued. Early in March the first grave symptom of disturbance arose in the Liberal camp, when Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Trevelyan resigned their seats in the Cabinet. The Ministerial ship, however, seemed to right itself, for the moment at least.

Otherwise the conduct of the new Government was steady, and consistent with Liberal principles as then recognized. But the difference between such principles and those of the Radicals was strongly marked. Mr. Labouchere, though not yet a leader, was then beginning to lead the Radical section, and to be a free lance menacing the Liberal flank. He and his would not unfrequently press some demand which the Government felt bound to resist. In deference apparently to this advanced section, many of the Ministerialists would be absent, or would vote against their own Front Bench upon those subjects which were not supposed to concern the stability of the Government. The Whips were at times afraid to summon their men, who might attend only to vote wrong. In these circumstances a certain number of us Conservatives could be depended upon to support the Liberal Government in doing what was right from a Conservative point of view. Accordingly night after night we found ourselves in the same lobby with the Ministers, helping them against a troublesome set among their own followers.

At length, on the 8th of April, Mr. Gladstone relieved the intense curiosity in all quarters of the

House by introducing his Home Rule measure for Ireland. I was prevented by illness from being present on that occasion. But subsequent experience of similar occasions has enabled me to realize the popular accounts of what happened: the long vigils of the Nationalist Members overnight to secure places early in the day; the scuffle and struggle of the Members generally to obtain seats; the galleries, the nooks and corners, in short, every square foot of standing space, all crammed; the very floor of the House covered with rows of chairs, specially placed there; the competition for every spot in the Strangers' Gallery; the scramble even among noble Lords for room in the gallery assigned to their Lordships—so much so that the scene was described as “an ugly rush of Peers;” the ovation rapturously accorded by his followers to the hero of the hour; the physical and mental efforts of the orator for more than two hours; the hushed silence, the rapt attention to the oration, broken from time to time by bursts of cheering, sometimes diversified by ironical exclamations from the Opposition; the peroration, followed by rounds and rounds of vociferous approbation; and the sudden stampede of Members to relieve the strain of

attention or to discuss the affair in the lobby outside.

From the very moment of utterance, the proposal of a "statutory" Parliament in Dublin was rejected by us Conservatives. Without knowing what the proposal would be, we were prepared for its rejection by reason of the resignation of Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Trevelyan. That event gave us the clearest premonition. If they, with every motive for agreeing, had been conscientiously obliged to disagree, how much more must we differ. If anything could intensify our disagreement it would be the manner whereby Mr. Gladstone dealt with Irish history. In some respects he did scant justice, and in other respects actual injustice, to England and the English.

I was not able to return to my place in the House till Wednesday, the 14th of April, the day after the debate on the First Reading was over, and the Bill had been read the first time. I learned that during this preliminary debate the three leaders of the dissentient Liberals as they were then called, Lord Hartington, Mr. Chamberlain, and Mr. Goschen, had spoken well, and that Mr. Trevelyan had also stood firm. Mr. Gladstone's opening speech in

March seemed to have impressed old Parliamentarians, some of whom said that it took their breath away, others that for a moment it benumbed their intellect. Apparently he made a less vivid impression on the rank and file of ordinary Members. But by all accounts the speech with which he wound up the debate on the First Reading in April was much finer. He raised the drooping spirits of his followers; he held his head aloft; and in his wrath against the dissentient Liberals he seemed to stand higher by inches than his ordinary stature. We remembered the words "*timor addidit alas;*" but this time it was *ira* that gave wings to his oratory. Already a list of many Liberals who would vote against the Second Reading was believed to have been prepared by Sir John Lubbock and others. Speculation was rife as to whether Mr. Chamberlain would carry with him the organization known as that of the Birmingham Caucus; and whether Mr. Gladstone would, by concessions, prevent the dissent from increasing.

On Thursday, the 15th, Sir William Harcourt introduced his Budget, speaking for the first time as Chancellor of the Exchequer. His speech was of an ordinary character; a deficit was avoided

simply by using a portion of the sum which the former Parliament had arranged to set aside annually towards the repayment of the National Debt ; truly a rough and ready method. Manifestly the object was to have as tame and unobtrusive a Budget as possible.

On Friday, the 16th, we heard Mr. Gladstone, as a sequel or a corollary to the Home Rule plan, propose his scheme for buying out the landlords of Ireland by an enormous sum—from 50 to 80 millions at least—to be borrowed on British credit, with dangerously imperfect security for repayment. This speech did not seem to us successful ; it was halting, lame, prolix. The House was at first crowded, then by degrees men dropped off, even gaps appeared in the audience ; and a buzz of conversation at last supervened. While his oratorical genius still remained, his once matchless power of exposition was becoming impaired. An amusing episode ensued ; for Mr. Chamberlain produced in reference to this proposal some correspondence that had passed between him and the Prime Minister, when the secession from the Cabinet occurred. This, of course, he did by permission of the Crown. The tenour of the letters was very creditable to him ;

and so was the deferential way in which he now submitted to many interruptions from Mr. Gladstone. This done, he attacked this Land-purchase Bill in a slashing, dashing style. Mr. Gladstone chafed under this for a while, and walked out apparently in dudgeon.

In the middle of April some proceedings of extraordinary interest occurred. On the 15th the Speaker read to us a letter from the Right Honourable Sir Thomas Erskine May resigning the Clerkship of the House. Sir Thomas had held this position for thirty years, completing more than half a century of service to the Commons. In that capacity he had by his lucid works on Parliamentary procedure rendered our House famous, not only in the remote parts of the British Empire, but in foreign countries also. His services were eulogised in those gracious and lofty terms which the Speaker had always at command. On the 15th a formal vote of thanks was passed to him on the motion of Mr. Gladstone, seconded by Sir Michael Hicks-Beach. He was raised to the Peerage as Lord Farnborough, but hardly lived to enjoy his honours, as he died the following month of May. His marble bust stands in the Library, and is looked upon with kindly

almost affectionate regard by the Parliamentarians of this generation.

On the following Monday of Passion week, the 19th, the House adjourned for the Easter Recess, to reassemble a fortnight later, on May the 3rd. It seems wonderful that so long a holiday should have been allowed at such a critical time. During the Recess many important speeches in the provinces were delivered against Home Rule, but the outcome of that agitation did not, at the moment, seem to be encouraging for our Unionist cause.

After the Easter Recess the course of affairs revolved round the Home Rule question as a centre. The Second Reading of this Bill for the Government of Ireland, as it was styled, was moved by Mr. Gladstone on the 11th of May. Entering the House for this purpose, he was vociferously cheered, but by the Nationalist section alone. Just afterwards Lord Hartington entered to oppose, and passed right in front of former colleagues on the Treasury Bench. At that moment he was cheered by the Conservatives opposite in the most significant tones. The first part of Mr. Gladstone's speech was disappointing; he was in poor form and voice, but approaching his peroration he rallied. He

proceeded to say what he would, and would not, concede to the dissentient Liberals. The effect of his expressions seemed to be that he would not settle concessions till the Bill had been read a second time, and that he would not have the work of the Committee stage mixed up with that of the Second Reading. In other words he would insist on the principle of his measure being approved *simpliciter* first of all. If his dissentient friends wished to suggest alterations in Committee he would give consideration and so forth. They, however, though loyally anxious to find a bridge whereby they might cross back to him, were yet resolved not to vote for the Second Reading unless they were assured of important alterations beforehand. We saw then that he was actually making the gulf impassable. So from that moment our fears of his Bill succeeding passed away, and we reckoned on defeating it. He lectured Lord Hartington with a paternal air which greatly amused us. But despite his eloquence, he spoke like an already beaten man, with the defiance that comes from despair.

Lord Hartington then rose, in all his might and massiveness, to move the rejection of the Bill. He

adhered closely to all Mr. Gladstone's points, and his replies to those points elevated him in our esteem. A weightier speech was not heard within our walls during that eventful Session.

Thus began a "full-dress" debate which extended over twelve nights. The Government did not take up the whole time of the House for it, nor prosecute it *de die in diem*; for it opened on the 11th of May and was brought to a close on the 8th of June. Contrary to frequent experience, the Opposition rather desired to arrive at a decision. The Government preferred to gain time, doubtless in the hope of conciliating the opponents among their own ranks. According to the practice of such debates, a great gun was fired from each of the two Front Benches every afternoon, shot answering shot. This cannonade of first-class oratory would take up the best time before the dinner-hour. Then a fusillade of lesser though still considerable speeches would go on till ten o'clock. Perhaps just at the witching half-hour before and after the dinner-bell, say about eight o'clock, some Member would *malgré lui* make a little speech, not because he had anything to say particularly, but because his constituents expected him to speak on

the grand subject. Several such Members would rise together just like a covey of partridges taking wing; the Speaker perhaps puzzled as to whom he should call, like the sportsman who fires into the brown. About ten o'clock the oratorical cannonade would recommence from the two Front Benches, and proceed till the small hours of the morning, when the discussion collapsed for the night.

The speaking on the Gladstonian Front Bench was conducted by Mr. John Morley, Mr. Campbell-Bannerman, Mr. Henry Fowler, Mr. James Bryce, Mr. Stansfeld, Sir Lyon Playfair and Mr. Shaw Lefevre. From the Radical quarter, Mr. Labouchere's speech was very long, but so amusing that few were conscious of its length. Among the Nationalist leaders, Mr. Sexton, Mr. Justin M'Carthy and Mr. Timothy Healy were conspicuous in the debate.

From our Opposition Front Bench strong speeches were made by Sir Richard (now Viscount) Cross, Mr. Henry Chaplin, Lord John Manners (now Duke of Rutland), Lord George Hamilton, and chief of all, Lord Randolph Churchill. On the Liberal Unionist side, besides the two Leaders

already mentioned, the speakers were Sir Henry James and Mr. Trevelyan. Remarkable speeches were also made by private members on the Unionist side who had not been in office—of whom some are no longer in Parliament, and others have passed away—Mr. Finlay, Mr. Arthur Elliot, Mr. Westlake, Professor Thorold Rogers, Mr. Winterbotham, Mr. Leatham, and others.

On the whole the Debate was truly grand during certain hours of each day, that is from five to seven o'clock in the afternoon, and from eleven to one o'clock at night. During the intermediate time it would wane; but through these hours it was sustained at the highest level that could reasonably be imagined—as regards social or political argument, administrative considerations, historical retrospect and foreign analogies. Thought was evolved, learning evinced, reasoning developed. Some passages were lighted up by eloquence, some were aglow with enthusiasm; some were sombre with destructive criticism, some were sharpened by invective. Take it all in all, it was quite the finest debate I have ever heard.

Our thoughts were, however, fixed more upon the quasi-parliamentary proceedings outside the House

than on the debate in the House itself. A Liberal Unionist Party in the House was quite formed by the middle of May, though it was as yet in two wings, one under Lord Hartington, the other under Mr. Chamberlain. It was expected that the two wings, which mustered eighty Members or more in all, would accept the Leadership of Lord Hartington in the House. Meanwhile the organization, of which Sir John Lubbock was among the founders, proceeded apace. We rejoiced to learn that Lord Hartington had convened a private meeting of his followers at Devonshire House, and Mr. Chamberlain of his followers in Prince's Gardens. On the other hand we heard that Mr. Labouchere and others were making strenuous efforts to patch up some reconciliation, or to set up some *modus vivendi* between Mr. Gladstone and the Liberal Unionists—called Dissident Liberals by the Gladstonians. Mr. Gladstone was brimful of conciliation and concession in generalities. But when the Liberal Unionists required particulars, he drew in his horns. Thus he practically conceded nothing that would satisfy them. Private conferences were held, whereon zealous partisans declared that means had been found to reconcile Mr. Chamberlain

at least. But when Mr. Gladstone came to speak in the House, these chances were dissipated. At a great reception in the Foreign Office by Lord Granville, the Foreign Secretary, several Gladstonian leaders still spoke hopefully of modifications being introduced that would re-unite the Liberal Party. But all was in vain; for it became known that Mr. Gladstone would adhere to what he had said when moving the Second Reading, would promise nothing now, and would not even consider possible concessions till the Bill should have passed into the Committee stage. Nevertheless it appeared that he desired to gain time before the decisive division on the Second Reading should take place, presumably in order to find some exit out of the labyrinth. We had so much fear of his resourcefulness in this line, that up to the last we feared lest he should somehow win back waverers. We perceived, too, that despite the defection of the Liberal Unionists, the Gladstonians had retained all the organization and the machinery of the old Liberal Party. Thus some stray Members might be drawn back to the fold by those Party ties which are ever potent. So it happened that while Mr. Gladstone rather desired to

protract the debate, our men wished to curtail it and to press on a decision while the situation was favourable, dreading lest time should operate adversely. Interpellations with this view were more than once addressed to him in the House. On the 28th of May he made his last effort by summoning a meeting of Liberal Members at the Foreign Office. Returning to the House he seemed more cheerful, as if he thought that some differences had been healed. It then appeared that the Ministerialists expected a small—or only a nominal—majority for Second Reading. Ever since Easter I had understood that the Nationalist Leaders had ceased hoping to pass the Bill this Session. Their idea seemed to be that a foundation would now be laid for passing a Bill next Session.

But the matter was not allowed to rest thus; immediately Sir Michael Hicks-Beach questioned Mr. Gladstone in the House as to what had passed at this meeting. The answers were not regarded as satisfactory or frank, still it transpired that in order to have peace with Mr. Chamberlain's Party at any price, and to secure the Second Reading *quocunque modo*, Mr. Gladstone had promised to leave the Bill

at that point and to defer it to some future occasion. This small Party was held to be the determining factor in the situation. If they should, after all, vote with Mr. Gladstone, then the Second Reading would be saved, though by a narrow majority; but it must be lost if they should persevere in their opposition. The next day Sir Michael Hicks-Beach returned to the charge with energetic warmth, and moved the adjournment of the House in order to elicit a reply from the Prime Minister. Then Mr. Gladstone acknowledged his intention to prorogue the House after the Second Reading and to re-introduce the Bill in an autumn Session. This, virtually would reduce the Second Reading to an abstract resolution, and justified Mr. Chamberlain in declaring that the Bill was already dead. Thus the last week but one in this great controversy ended gloomily for the Government. Early in the following week, I noticed one afternoon that Mr. Marjoribanks, the Whip, came up to Mr. Gladstone, then seated on the Treasury Bench, and spoke to him with seriousness. Of course we knew not what was being said, but divining that some event had happened I went into the outer lobby. I there learnt that Mr. Chamberlain had held a meeting of

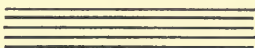
his Party, that an earnest letter from Mr. John Bright had been read to them, and that they had decided to vote against the Second Reading. He himself followed up the movement by choosing this time for making his own speech in the debate as the final manifesto. This he did in his most brilliant style. The last speech but one on the Nationalist side was made by Mr. T. P. O'Connor, who had been Mr. Parnell's lieutenant in England during the General Election of the previous year, and now represented that division of Liverpool which formed an Irish quarter. There was special significance, indeed cynicism, in this, for he virtually tried to shew that he had been promised support from many Conservative candidates in English constituencies. This week closed even more unfavourably than the last, and the Division was now fixed for the following Monday by the consent of both sides—as arrangements of this sort are usually agreed upon between the Whips of the two main Parties, so that they may muster their respective forces. Late on Friday night we learnt from Members in the Radical camp that if the division were taken then, the Bill would be thrown out by a majority of more than thirty—a remarkably accurate prediction—but

that possibly some waverers might be won over the next day, as Saturday is always suitable for such negotiations. Efforts in this direction were made by Mr. Labouchere, and perhaps by other intermediaries, during the brief interval between Friday night and Monday afternoon, but without avail.

Though we dreaded Mr. Gladstone's inventiveness, ingenuity and resource even to the last, still his defeat was in our minds a foregone conclusion. In our eagerness we hardly paused to think out the consequences that must follow. Still, in the bottom of our minds we had the unexpressed thought of immediate dissolution.

On the Friday we Conservatives received a preliminary five-lined Whip, or notice as a fore-warning in these terms:—

MOST IMPORTANT.



The Division on the Government of Ireland Bill is now definitely fixed for Monday, June the 7th, on which day Members are most earnestly requested to be in their places.

A. AKERS DOUGLAS.

On the Monday morning we had the following five-lined Whip:—

MOST IMPORTANT.

On Monday, June the 7th, the House will meet at four o'clock.

The Debate on the Second Reading of

The Government of Ireland Bill

will be concluded, and a Division of the most vital importance

taken.

Your attendance, not later than eleven o'clock, is most earn-

estly and particularly requested.

A. AKERS DOUGLAS.

On that day many Members of all Parties attended the House early in the afternoon. Even many of the Leaders were present, like shepherds watching their flocks. Never have I, before or since, seen the luncheon-rooms so full as on that day. The buzz or hum of preparation was gently audible through-

out the precincts. At Prayer-time the Chamber of the House resembled a chapel thronged with its congregation.

All Parties doubtless interested or amused themselves by making statistical calculations of the coming division, reckoning the very last man. But there was a floating residuum of men called "waverers," or "un-declared," who confounded the best calculators even up to the latest moment. On our side the outcome of the estimates was in this wise; and it proved to be very near the truth. In our division lobby for the Noes we expected 250 Conservatives, that being our full number less two, and 85 Liberal Unionists, or 335 in all. In the Gladstonian lobby for the Ayes we thought there would be 332 less the 85 Liberal Unionists aforesaid and less 20 un-declared, with 3 sick, or 224. To the latter figure would be added 85 Nationalists, making the total up to 309. This calculation gave us a clear majority of 26 against the Government. These figures, together with the Speaker, accounted for the 670 Members of the whole House. Of course the result depended on the action of the "un-declared" who were in their hearts against the Bill, and might or might not at the last moment be

induced to vote with their Party and their Government. Or, possibly, some might abstain from voting altogether.

The debate that night was eventful. It was begun on our side by Mr. Goschen with a speech which was an eloquent summary of our contention, and shed lustre on his reputation as a debater. He was immediately followed by Mr. Parnell, who was to speak the last word on the Nationalist side, with the utterance of one among the most remarkable speeches I ever heard. This was the last time I beheld Mr. Parnell to the utmost advantage. His form was handsome, graceful, dignified, commanding, and his attitude was forceful, defiant, triumphant. He evidently thought he had at length got his foot on the neck of British opposition to Home Rule. In contemptuous tones he recalled the measures which had in vain been adopted by Britain to keep down the Nationalist Party. He looked upon this Bill as the inevitable deed of surrender and the article of capitulation. Before concluding he declared that he had been virtually offered something like Home Rule in 1885, by a Member of the then Conservative Government. This provoked indignant denial from our side on the instant, just

before the dinner-hour. After that hour Mr. Cowen, with a northern accent hard for us to understand, delivered the last of those imaginative discourses—adorned with the richest imagery—which had often delighted Parliament. Meanwhile Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, having employed the interval in verification, proceeded to close the argument on our side, and then he challenged Mr. Parnell's statement of the offer alleged to have been made. The delivery of this challenge produced quite a spirited scene. Of course Mr. Parnell persisted, but all he could adduce was a reference to a private conference to which he had been invited by the Earl of Carnarvon, then Lord-Lieutenant—a conversation which afterwards became the subject of some correspondence.

It was midnight when Mr. Gladstone rose to say the last word, and to make his fourth great speech on the Bill. He began poorly, with some arguments that to us seemed trivial, and he made some sarcastic or bantering allusions to our Party. These we received with ironical cheers and derisive exclamations, which disconcerted him. He indirectly appealed to us not to interrupt an old man, whereon we politely desisted. Oddly enough, he proceeded

with his argument, and then said that honourable gentlemen opposite do not laugh now!—flattering himself that we were subdued by his arguments, whereas in truth we had restrained ourselves merely in deference to his age and position. However, we whispered to each other, “Let him go on, it is only the song, politically, of the dying swan.” Towards the peroration his eloquence grew, and swelled and soared. For the last twenty minutes or so I have never heard such oratory anywhere from any man; indeed he poured his very soul into it. Our reason was, of course, steeled against conviction by such persuasion. With touching metaphor he pointed with out-stretched arm to our Bar, the historic Bar of the Commons, and pictured Ireland standing there and pleading. The apparition was visible to his eye of faith—like the ghost in the tragedy seen by one alone out of the company at the banquet. But with our unbelieving eyes we beheld it not.

When he sat down in the first hour of that summer's morn, there was, among us at least, a relief of mental tension. For up to the last moment we dreaded lest he should say something, or adumbrate some vague concession, that might serve to convert waverers, two or more,—though it

was hoped that by this supreme moment every one must have made up his mind, even though he might not declare it. However, we at length found for certain that nothing had escaped from the great orator that could avail to turn the balance of any hesitating mind, and that no argument sufficient for conversion had been adduced. The usual cheers rang forth when he ceased speaking, but they subsided quickly, for the Speaker rose to put the Question.

The historic division immediately ensuing, as seen from my quarter of the House, may claim a brief description. The Question was put by the Speaker; Mr. Gladstone had moved that the Bill be now read a second time; Lord Hartington had moved that it be read a second time that day six months—the regular formula of rejection. The Question was that “now” stand part of the motion. Our Party pronounced its Noes, the other its Ayes with resounding chorus. Then the Irish began to shout “agreed! agreed!” in a meaningless manner. The Conservatives rejoined, “the Noes have it!” with an angry shout not easily to be forgotten. The Gladstonian Tellers for the Ayes were their official Whips, Mr. Arnold Morley and Mr. Marjoribanks;

the Unionist Liberal Tellers for the Noes were Mr. Brand for the Hartington section, and Mr. Caine for the Chamberlain section. The Conservative Leaders preferred that the lead should be taken by the Unionist Liberals, who would then be supported by the whole Conservative Party. Instantly the Chamber was a scene of movement as the Members rose from their places, wending towards the division lobbies. We remained seated for a few moments to note whether the Liberals who were expected to vote with us would really move in the right direction. They all did so, and then we were sure that there would be no "ratting" or tergiversation. A few Liberals walked out of the House to avoid voting, their feelings being divided between fidelity to opinion and loyalty to Party. These also were known to us, and they were acting just as it was reckoned that they would act. It was clear, however, that in their hearts they were opposed to the Bill.

So we mustered in our "No" lobby: all our men present save two: one sick, a man of known loyalty; the other was purposely absent, and wittily said to be "indisposed." Never have I seen our men in such a joyous and buoyant mood as at that moment.

Mr. Bright was with us to record his vote on this crowning occasion. A fair majority on the Unionist side was assured in our minds; though, perhaps, not so good as that which we actually were proved to have. Everybody was elated at the thought of the victory immediately at hand. Nobody seemed depressed by any thought or reflection on the trouble that must follow. As we reassembled in the Chamber, the Tellers for the "Ayes" or Gladstonians were the first to return to the House, whereon the Nationalists set up a cheer, forgetting that this very fact shewed not that they would win but that they would lose, inasmuch as the Tellers who have the lesser number to count will come in first, and those who have the larger number to count will come in last. Very soon all doubt was dispelled, as the Tellers for the Noes, or Unionists, came in. Both sets of Tellers advanced to the Table; the No Tellers on the right received a paper from the Clerk. Their being on the right shewed that they had won, and a rising cheer was checked while they read out the numbers and handed the paper to the Speaker. Again an outburst was restrained till the numbers were pronounced from the Chair: "Ayes, 311; Noes, 341;

so the Noes have it;" and this by a majority of 30 against the Government. Then our men above the gangway on the left of the Chair stood up in their places, holding their hats aloft, and the pent-up cheers poured forth. These subsiding, they sat down again. Then on the other, or right side, below the Gangway, the Unionist Liberals stood up and cheered, as it were saluting us as their allies. But the Opposition Leaders on our Front Bench, and the two Unionist Leaders, Lord Hartington and Mr. Chamberlain, kept their seats. Hitherto the demonstrations had been well regulated, and measured with stately cadence suitable to the House of Parliament. But now the Nationalists rose, and with tumultuousness cried out, "Three cheers for the Grand Old Man!" as if they were in a boisterous meeting-house. This ended, I heard a peculiar sound proceeding from the Irish benches, of which I could not catch the articulation, but I soon learnt that it was animadversion from the Irish directed against Mr. Chamberlain.

Silence restored, Mr. Gladstone arose, pale and worn. Producing a paper from his pocket, which evidently had been drawn up in readiness for this contingency, he moved that after the vote just

announced the House should adjourn till Thursday, together with some subsidiary motions. This he did with entire self-command and coolness. Then the crowded benches were once more astir, and the floor of the House became jammed with Members moving towards the outer lobby, where they soon formed groups for discussing the event that had just happened. Our men were as yet excited with the flush of triumph, and on the homeward way before dawn they hardly paused to reflect upon what must follow the patriotic action they had taken.

On the Thursday following we re-assembled to hear our fate announced by Mr. Gladstone. Some sixty hours of cool reflection, after the excited division, had sufficiently assured us of what that fate must be. Dissolution may have a spirit-stirring sound to the majority of British mankind. But to most of the Members of the Parliament so dissolved the word has a serious, and to some even an ominous, import. To many it signifies at the best, expense, anxiety and labour. To others it portends defeat, vexation and disappointment as the fruit of all this trouble. So the demeanour of Members was subdued at first. Then Mr. Gladstone, looking well, far better than he had looked

while his Bill was pending, announced that the Queen had accepted the Ministerial advice to dissolve the present Parliament. The Conservatives set up a ringing cheer, as if anticipating their triumph at the polls. Some interpellation followed about the winding-up of the Session. In the course of this conversation Mr. Gladstone spoke, not at all as a beaten Minister, but rather as if he were appealing from the House of Commons to the Country. Alluding to the majority that had defeated him, he described it as what geologists call "a plum-pudding rock."

The work of winding-up the Session immediately began. The brief Whitsuntide Recess followed; after which I returned to the House and found it more than half deserted by its Members, as very many were busy in their constituencies. Some Supply business had to be despatched, including the Appropriation Bill. But the complete voting of the Supplies for the year was deliberately postponed till the new Parliament should meet late in the Summer. The two Parties were mutually jealous lest either—whichever might be victorious in the General Election — should have administrative power unrestrained by Parliament during the

autumn. The only episode worth recounting was a speech by Sir Lyon (now Lord) Playfair on the Report of the Education Department for the year. The Indian Budget was delivered to an even more than ordinarily empty House. Like most others I was obliged to leave the House before the close of the Session. The end actually came on Friday the 25th of June.

For us new Members—who were to plunge again into the vortex of electioneering from which we had but recently emerged—this Parliament, consisting of a single Session, seemed as a troublous dream. The Parliamentary scenes and phases, clouds and lightnings, re-appeared as in a phantasmagoria, and the colossal figures flitted across our plane of mental vision as over the screen of a magic lantern.

CHAPTER IV.

SECOND SESSION OF 1886.

General Election of 1886 and defeat of the Home Rule Party.—Formation of a Government by the Marquess of Salisbury—Lord Randolph Churchill Leader in the Commons—Alliance with the Liberal Unionists—Meeting of Parliament, August 5th—Re-election of Mr. Peel as Speaker—Address moved in the Commons in reply to the Speech from the Throne on 19th—Debate thereon—Speeches by Lord Randolph Churchill, the Marquess of Hartington, Mr. Chamberlain, and Mr. Parnell—The business of Supply—Mr. Parnell produces a Rent Bill which is rejected—Supply finished and Parliament prorogued on September 24th.

THE Party advocating Home Rule for Ireland had been smitten hip and thigh in Great Britain, especially in southern England, during the General Election which took place in July, 1886. In this respect the Metropolitan area had distinguished itself. The contest was fought on the single issue of the Bill of Home Rule for Ireland. Mr. Gladstone himself said truly that England “barred the way” to the favourite measure of his old age. This decisive victory for the Unionist cause was won mainly of course by the Conservatives, but largely also by the Liberal Unionists who elected

to act as allies. The general agreement, that Conservative electors should support those Liberal candidates who were Unionists, had been loyally kept. In the defeat of Mr. Gladstone during the last Parliament, the Liberal Unionists, had been placed in the van, almost as leaders, by the Conservative Party. Now, however, they seemed to prefer acting as allies. They chose, doubtless from sound and patriotic motives, to refrain from holding office and to afford a consistent, though independent, support to the new Administration. A Conservative Government was accordingly formed, with the Marquess of Salisbury as Premier leading the Lords, and Lord Randolph Churchill as Chancellor of the Exchequer leading the Commons. The position of Lord Salisbury was a foregone conclusion, but that of Lord Randolph Churchill caused wonderment as well as approbation. His ascent to the pinnacle of influence in Conservative counsels had indeed been rapid. Some of the old leaders, Sir Stafford Northcote and Sir Richard Cross, had been promoted to the Lords as the Earl of Iddesleigh and Viscount Cross. Two other chiefs, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach and Mr. W. H. Smith, agreed to serve under his leadership.

Herein wisdom was displayed all round ; for Lord Randolph Churchill had been the standard-bearer in the electoral battle just won ; and in the words of a typical Conservative “ he had taught the people to believe in us.” The elder Members hesitated when they thought of so young a man, such a dashing politician, such a Rupert in debate as he was, being thus elevated. But he alone had the requisite influence, power and authority, so it was meet that he should bear the responsibility. Next after him the most important functionary at this juncture was Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, the Chief Secretary for Ireland. Among his colleagues on the Front Bench were Mr. Arthur Balfour and Mr. W. H. Smith, both destined to play great parts in this Parliament.

The new Parliament met on Thursday, the 5th of August, 1886, in lovely weather, contrasting with the wintry gloom amidst which the last Session had opened. Never had I beheld such a joyous meeting as that of the Members in the outer lobby ; friends who had served in the last Parliament interchanging congratulations, discussing their respective majorities in the Election just over, and recounting the troubles they had overcome ; acquaintances from

the outside, who after much tribulation had won their entrance within the coveted precincts—now receiving welcome from their comrades. The late Ministers were in their places. But the new Conservative Ministers were absent, having vacated their seats by accepting office under the Crown. They were awaiting re-election by their constituents. Soon the Black Rod in uniform knocked at our door according to ancient custom, and from the Bar of the Lords we heard the Royal Commissioners in their red robes communicate the Queen's commands that we should elect a Speaker. Then in our own House, Sir Edward Birkbeck from our side proposed the re-election of the former Speaker, Mr. Arthur Peel. This was seconded by Mr. Gladstone himself, in graceful language but feeble tones, from the Front Opposition Bench. He could not avoid the aspect of fatigue and depression. Standing on the steps of the Chair, Mr. Peel returned thanks in that lofty and sonorous style which must ever impress new Members with the dignity of the Assembly they are entering. Next day he headed our procession to the Bar of the Lords, announced his election to the Speakership, received the approbation of the Queen and

claimed the privileges of the "faithful Commons." Returning to our own House we proceeded with the swearing-in of Members. This over, the House adjourned till the 19th, by which time the new Ministers would have been re-elected.

On Thursday the 19th of August we attended, with the Speaker at our head, before the Royal Commission, which consisted of four Peers seated at the Table in their red robes, to hear the Royal Speech read by the Lord Chancellor, Lord Halsbury. Nothing could be more modest and unassuming than the allusion in the Speech to the victorious result of the General Election. As regarded Home Rule for Ireland, the electors in general had come to the same conclusion as the late Parliament—that was all. Returning to our own House we found the Parties seated in their respective quarters, like hosts arrayed in order of battle. Along the whole of our side, to the right of the Table, sat the Conservatives, who, forming the largest section, had more roomy accommodation than any other Party. For on the opposite side, the space above the gangway alone was occupied by the followers proper of Mr. Gladstone. Among them were mixed the Liberal Unionists,

an inevitable, but none the less uncomfortable, arrangement for all concerned. At the end of the Front Opposition Bench, and consequently at Mr. Gladstone's very elbow, sat three Liberal Chiefs, Lord Hartington, Mr. Chamberlain, and Sir Henry James. This situation, though it could hardly have been avoided, must have been galling to Mr. Gladstone and his henchmen. No wonder that Opposition leaders frequently spoke with asperity of the supporters of the Government "on this side of the House." Below the gangway all the benches were occupied by the Irish Nationalists, except one at the bottom nearest the floor, where sat the quasi-independent Radicals, headed by Mr. Dillwyn and Mr. Labouchere.

From such reflections we were roused by the Speaker calling to the new Ministers, who were standing meekly at the Bar, to advance to the Table and take the oath after re-election. The advance of each man—first Lord Randolph Churchill and then his colleagues, one by one—was greeted with rounds and rounds of cheering from our side; the several ovations being graduated according to the estimation in which the several recipients were held by their Party.

The Address in reply to the Gracious Speech was moved by Colonel King-Harman, a typical Irishman, since deceased, and seconded by Mr. J. M. Maclean, representing a Lancashire constituency. Then the debate was opened by Mr. Gladstone, who had recovered his equanimity. He began with mild and measured sentences; but, adverting to Ireland, he seemed to our men to compress an infinitude of mischief into a small space. As he was speaking, muttered invectives rolled like muffled drums along our benches. Among other things he objected to proceed with Supply until the new Government had declared its Irish policy. Perhaps this objection was meant to be embarrassing. But Lord Randolph Churchill rose at once to take him at his word and expound the Irish policy of the Government, although the time was close upon the dinner-hour. He retained the attention of a large audience right through that hour to nine o'clock, and dilated fully on the three heads relating to Ireland—the maintenance of law and order, the landed interests, the prospects of local self-government. He held decisive language to the Nationalists, quite flinging the gauntlet to them, leaving them to do their worst, and refusing an Autumn Session. We re-

joiced that in this his maiden speech as Leader of the House he should have shown so much grasp and grit, so much foresight and resolution.

This debate on the Address lasted for several days, that is till the 2nd of September. Hostile amendments were moved and defeated by majorities sometimes rising to about 120. Speeches were made by the new Ministers, by Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues, by the Nationalist orators. Both Front Benches acquitted themselves well; but the oratory of the Nationalists was long-drawn-out. Two speeches must, however, be singled out for notice, one by Lord Hartington, the other by Mr. Chamberlain, as the utterances of both were awaited by us with hopefulness indeed, but still with anxiety. When Lord Hartington rose, there burst forth such a ringing cheer from the Conservative Benches that he seemed half taken aback by the enthusiasm of the reception. His massive and potent speech was in support of our Government through and through. He was received in chilling silence, of course, by the Gladstonians among whom he sat, and was frequently interrupted with extreme impatience by the Nationalists. But he was invariably supported by Conservative cheers. His command-

ing personality, with the loftiness of his social status and of his political character, was signally advantageous to our side. Mr. Chamberlain's speech was similarly favourable to our cause, and he had an equally enthusiastic reception from our men. It was a fine sight to see him rising from the Front Opposition Bench and attacking the Liberal Leaders who sat around him. He by no means vituperated them, but confined himself to pointing out their inconsistencies. The Nationalists also seemed to feel the sting of his criticism, and retaliated with a running fire of interruptions. His oration was distinguished by language concise, simple, pointed, incisive; by sentences short and compact; by utterance sharp and fluent; by gesture quick and nervous; by wit pungent and familiar but not elaborated. His peroration was patriotic, rising to eloquence, with that half-suppressed emotion which is best calculated to affect a Parliamentary audience. After all this, the Gladstonians perforce acknowledged the solidity of the alliance between the Conservatives and the Liberal Unionists.

A hostile amendment was moved by Mr. Parnell, in a speech which we admitted to be admirable in delivery, whatever we might think of its substance.

The utterance was cool and clear, the substance well ordered, the style correct, the gesture moderate and appropriate. The impressive performance was set off by his handsome form and dignified bearing. But here my praise must end; for his speech in effect was gravely objectionable. Under the guise of pacification he preached disturbance; under the veil of legality he suggested public plunder. He seemed to entreat the Irish peasantry to be patient; in effect he urged them to immediate resistance. There was a cynical calmness in his manner which made us think that he was either bent on some desperate mission, or else felt himself to be drifting into a desperate position. After a debate his amendment was rejected by a majority of 123, the Unionist Party having mustered strong for their first important Division. That was one of the very best majorities that we ever attained during this Parliament.

The riots at Belfast during the summer, with the collision between Protestants and Roman Catholics, gave Mr. Sexton an opportunity of giving vent to his indignation. Thereon a Royal Commission of Enquiry was granted. Lord Randolph Churchill had made elsewhere his famous speech ending with

“Ulster will fight, and Ulster will be right.” Mr. Labouchere brought these utterances to the notice of the House. But the Conservatives adroitly slipped away and left him to address the desert of green benches, while they watched the scene from the lobbies. Lord Randolph Churchill rose to reply, whereon the benches re-filled instantly with the Members flocking to support their Leader. So the episode had in it something of the serio-comic.

On the 6th of September Lord Randolph Churchill moved to take up the whole time of the House for Supply. It may be remembered that in the last Session the preliminary votes for the Army and Navy—including the strength and pay of the Forces—had been passed, and that Votes on Account had also been allowed for the State Services generally. As a consequence, all these votes, more than a hundred in number, had now to be completed in this Session by the New Parliament. Our Leaders when in Opposition, before the General Election, had been parties to this arrangement. They had to carry it into effect now that the said Election had placed them in office. This might prove to be a grave undertaking at the beginning of autumn,

should the Nationalists be disposed to do us mischief.

Thereon Mr. Parnell, evidently bent on using obstruction as the means of wringing concessions from us, proposed to introduce a Bill of a temporary or provisional character regarding the collection of rents in Ireland. After some hesitation, Lord Randolph Churchill agreed to afford a chance of this being done. The concession was necessary in order to smooth the passage of Supply, which was in a critical position owing to the lateness of the season, and the difficulty of keeping our men together in sufficient numbers to resist possible obstruction that might be designed for some ulterior object. I remember noticing that Mr. John Morley seemed overjoyed at this concession. Perhaps he supposed that it meant more than it really did.

This particular concession to Mr. Parnell did, fortunately, cause Supply to be expedited. After a while the Nationalists softened or shortened their obstruction to Supply, in order that Mr. Parnell might have a fair field on the date chosen by himself for introducing his Bill. The voting of Supplies had been finished, and the

Appropriation Bill had been read a first time, when on the 20th of September he produced his Rent Bill, which really was a bold proposal for plundering the landlords, by placing the collection of their rents at the mercy of the Nationalists. He was well dressed and externally smart for the occasion. But no sooner had he begun to speak than we saw that he was unwell and in weak form. He had not properly prepared his case, nor duly marshalled his facts and quotations. So he hesitated, fumbled, lost his argumentative thread and repeated himself. Strange was the contrast between this speech and the last two powerful speeches which we had heard from him; one in the debate on the Address this Session, the other at the close of the Home Rule debate last Session. During the debate which ensued, Mr. Gladstone made a vigorous onslaught upon the Conservative Party. He seemed to think that his Parliamentary fame and experience entitled him to press challenges with the closest thrusts against our men, while they sat silent in an attitude of confession. But he must have mis-read the temper of the Members of the new Parliament, for they instantly fired volleys of "No! No!" and other ejaculations, whereat his

anger waxed hot and his gesticulation grew in vehemence. He was brilliantly answered by Mr. Henry Matthews, the new Home Secretary, who spoke for the first time from our Treasury Bench ; and we felt that a fresh gun had been mounted on our battery. Mr. John Morley made a conciliatory speech, indulging the vain hope that the Second Reading might be allowed, and the harsh features softened in Committee. A vigorous and cutting speech from the Ulster side was made by Mr. Thomas Wallace Russell, whom we perceived to be a debater of the first order in this particular line. On the Nationalist side Mr. Dillon raged — or “rampaged,” in the phrase familiar with us—with a fury and fanaticism not at all simulated, but honestly and sincerely felt. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, as Irish Secretary, took his share of these debates in a thoroughly business-like and satisfactory manner, proving himself fully equal to his high office, which, at this juncture, was second only to that of the Leadership in importance. Mr. Parnell’s Bill was rejected on the division by a majority of nearly a hundred. Very shortly afterwards, the stages of the Appropriation Bill were completed. Thus the Session

was over, and Parliament was prorogued on the 24th of September.

Although by reason of pairing, of sport, and of excursions, the last days of summer are not favourable for observing the *personnel* of the House, yet during the six weeks' sitting of the new Parliament I had been able to gauge its composition with some exactness. The previous Parliament of 1885 was the first one elected under the newly extended franchise, the extension previously applied to the towns having then been granted to the counties. No deterioration was apparent in the Members of the House as a whole. It would be difficult to describe accurately the Nationalist Members, who could be regarded in various ways from different points of view. But irrespectively of these—be their merit what it might—the new Parliament elected in 1886 was decidedly an excellent one. Taking both the Conservative and the Liberal Parties together, in respect of social status and of personal merit, the average was so good that we prayed it might be preserved in future Parliaments. In respect of individual eminence, on both sides of the House there was reason for patriotic felicitation. Some

Members represented the principal heads of physical science, others the several walks of literature. Some had served the Empire abroad in high capacities, civil or military; and some had acquired a fame likely to become historic. The representatives of the various branches of commercial industries, and of agriculture, still the greatest of all the industries, were among our number. A very old Member, who was quite a Nestor to us, said that he had never known a better Conservative Party than that which was now assembled, perhaps never quite so good a one.

Lord Randolph Churchill was the guiding star in the beginning of this new Parliament. During this short Session of August and September, 1886, he had, in the estimation of his followers in the House, justified the selection which the Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, had made of him to lead them. On the one hand he had not relinquished any of his known qualifications as a strategist in electioneering campaigns, as the best platform speaker, and as the most potent orator at mass-meetings, of that day. On the other hand, he had from his Front Bench in the Commons evinced tact, readiness, resourcefulness, courage, and re-

solution. Though his course had been meteoric, we thought that its coruscation and radiance would continue. To use another metaphor, he had like an eagle soared aloft, and was poised in mid-air on strong wing. We knew, of course, that he must swoop down somewhere and upon something. Yet we trusted that the flight would descend nowhere but upon the Opposition, and on none but our opponents. We were in better heart at the close of this short Session than we had been at its opening. There were the serried ranks of our own Conservative phalanx for all patriotic measures, though differences might be found among us on social questions. The staunchness of our Liberal Unionist allies was all that could be desired. And we had Leaders with whom our combined Party might "go anywhere or do anything" within the Parliamentary sphere.

CHAPTER V.

SESSION OF 1887.

Meeting of Parliament, January 27th—Lord Randolph Churchill's resignation—Mr. W. H. Smith appointed Leader in the Commons—Mr. Goschen Chancellor of the Exchequer—Debate on the Address in reply to the Queen's Speech concluded February 18th—Revision of Procedure Rules—Sir Michael Hicks-Beach temporarily retires from illness, and is succeeded by Mr. Arthur Balfour as Chief Secretary for Ireland—Crimes Bill for Ireland introduced and read second time, April 19th—Mr. Goschen's first Budget—Crimes Bill in Committee from April 29th to 17th June—Special measures for concluding the Committee stage—Celebration by the Commons of the Queen's Jubilee—Special measures for Third Reading of Crimes Bill, July 8th—Land Bill for Ireland read second time, July 14th, and third time, August 6th—National League proclaimed in Ireland, August 17th—Supply concluded and Parliament prorogued, September 18th.

PARLIAMENT re-assembled on Thursday, the 27th of January, 1887, very quietly as compared with the meeting of January in the preceding year. But with this external tranquillity there was disquiet deep in our minds. For Lord Randolph Churchill had shortly before this time resigned, and had been replaced.

When the summer Session of last year, 1886, broke up, and Members had flown away to their

homes or for their holidays, Lord Randolph Churchill had gone for a tour on the Continent. His movements were observed with friendly interest by his Parliamentary followers, who trusted that he was gaining knowledge to be turned to patriotic and imperial uses. Returning to England he made in November a memorable speech at Dartford, in Kent. This brilliant oration insisted on economy and retrenchment of expense, regarding not only domestic administration, but also imperial relations and national defence. It also advocated reforms and other measures of social progress, which were in advance of even progressive Conservatives. Still the Party at large, though disturbed, were not alienated. They doubtless said to themselves—"the translating of these principles into practice is really the rub; a Cabinet-Minister on the Front Bench will surely be guarded in action." But just at Christmas-time, without a whisper of previous warning, his resignation was publicly announced with every appearance of being irrevocable. If there can be such a thing as "a bolt from the blue," this was it. The cause was immediately stated in brief and general terms. There had been a difference in the Cabinet, he had,

as Chancellor of the Exchequer, required that a certain amount, some millions—a very few millions, however—should be docked from the estimates for the Army and Navy. The Secretary of State for War and the First Lord of the Admiralty had declared positively “non possumus”; thereon he resigned. We Conservatives received the news with astonishment, but without dismay. It was seen at once that Lord Salisbury and his colleagues recognised the wide gap that had been made, but would close their ranks. Lord Hartington hastened back from abroad to confer with his Conservative allies. Apparently some re-construction of the Cabinet was contemplated by the admission of Liberal Unionists—possibly he himself may have been offered the leadership of the Commons, in which capacity many of our men would have welcomed him. Be this as it may, he and most of his henchmen continued to hold aloof from office. But the void was filled by Mr. Goschen, who, a Liberal Unionist, agreed to join the Government as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and he was—if Mr. Gladstone be set apart—the first financier of the day. He needed, however, a seat in the House, and that was given to him by one of the most Conservative

of the Metropolitan constituencies. The Leadership of the House was assigned to Mr. William Henry Smith. He had heretofore been Secretary of State for War, and was now First Lord of the Treasury. Though not pretending to be brilliant, he was safe, popular and trustworthy. Thus with its broken front fully mended, the Conservative Government met Parliament on the 27th of January, 1887.

Almost the very first thing was the hearing of Lord Randolph Churchill's personal explanation—or "*apologia*" as our men called it. At that moment a London fog had penetrated to the chamber and permeated all objects; so when he rose from the end seat (next the gangway) immediately behind the Front Ministerial Bench, his figure loomed misty even to those who sat a few seats off. He was received with something of the old cheering from our men, as much as to say that his past services to our cause would ever be remembered, and that even now he would have the fairest attention. He forthwith confirmed what had been publicly stated as to the cause of his resignation. For a while his points were received silently by our side, but with cheers from the other side, some of which had a sinister

significance. Then he went on to deliver what our men regarded as an attack on the military, the naval, and the foreign policy of England; whereon they broke into murmurings. He showed, however, that he was going to remain on our side, and would not cross over. He would be a free lance, evidently, and a candid friend at the best. He wound up with some ominous words which were interpreted to mean that he now looked to opinion in the constituencies. He sat down amidst silence—how different from the greeting with which his perorations on former occasions had been received! Our men felt that his going was a pity, but that he had gone. Many hoped to win him back again ere long. Some feared that there would be a secession together with him. It was soon found that the seceders, if any, would be few.

He had, as he affirmed, and as Mr. Gladstone was prompt to acknowledge, made sacrifices of office, association, place and power, for the sake of pledges to the public about retrenchment and reform, and he was accordingly to be honoured. But among some of his Parliamentary followers this question arose,—in what capacity did he make these pledges—as an individual statesman or as a party

leader? If he did this as a party leader, then a point would be raised of some delicacy as to the relations between a leader and his party. On the one hand, if a party elects a leader to represent them, it is *primâ facie*, and to some extent at least, bound by what he may say. On the other hand, he may be expected to consider what they in general think, and usually to consult their wishes.

This episode over, Mr. W. H. Smith, in his maiden speech as Leader, paid a tribute to the memory of the Earl of Iddesleigh, who had died suddenly a few days before, and as Sir Stafford Northcote, for some time held the Leadership. This was seconded by Mr. Gladstone in that graceful, touching, and befitting manner which he never failed to display on these occasions.

The Speech from the Throne had been read to us by the Lord Chancellor, Lord Halsbury, as we stood at the Bar of the Lords. It set forth a comprehensive policy of progress and improvement, far beyond the scope of a single Session. It embodied a general declaration of the Unionist policy. In the forefront it placed the modification of the criminal procedure in Ireland, so as to secure the prompt and efficient administration of the Criminal

Law. This was understood by the Nationalist Members to foreshadow what they called "coercion." The Address in reply was moved by Lord Weymouth in uniform, and seconded, in Court dress, by Gerald, brother of the now famous Arthur, Balfour. This produced a prolix and acrimonious debate, lasting for many days.

Then Lord Randolph Churchill returned to the charge on the 31st of January, developing more fully the speech which has just been described. His arguments, now more completely systematized, were tantamount to an assault on the Conservative policy all round, at home and abroad—an assault, too, delivered with rhetorical skill and consummate ability. As he himself phrased it, he was wrestling with his Party. He declared that as he had done his best for the interests of the English people, he appealed to them as to Cæsar. He turned upon the Liberal Unionists, describing them as a crutch on which the Conservatives had leant, and with which they had better dispense, so that they might walk alone, as they might well do if they would adopt his policy. Our men were mightily displeased at this attack on their loyal and much esteemed allies. The indignation of the Liberal

Unionists themselves was soon expressed by Lord Wolmer, eldest son of Lord Selborne, and son-in-law of the Prime Minister.

Notwithstanding all this, Lord Randolph Churchill very soon succeeded in impressing his mark on the Military administration. The Minister of War and the First Lord of the Admiralty agreed to facilitate criticism by circulating papers beforehand; and a Select Committee was appointed to investigate all the military establishments.

The Nationalist Members intended the debate on the Address to be so protracted that the impotency of Parliament to despatch business opposed by them and their Gladstonian allies should be demonstrated. It was understood that Mr. Parnell and Mr. Labouchere had arranged between themselves that the Government, despite its majority of a hundred, should not be allowed to do anything this Session. So the great debate literally dragged its length along. The attack was delivered in the old way by trenchant speeches from Mr. Gladstone, Sir William Harcourt, Mr. John Morley, Mr. Parnell, and his henchmen. It was beaten off in the old way by massive speeches from Mr.

Goschen, Lord Hartington, Mr. Chamberlain, Sir Edward Clarke. Nothing could be more loyal and effective than the support given by the Liberal Unionist leaders. Lord Randolph Churchill had, after the agitation of recent events, gone to the south of Europe. Mr. Parnell was evidently stricken with some malady, shrunk and enfeebled, faltering in speech whenever he dealt with facts, figures and arguments. But when fulminating with flashes of irony, or pointing at us with extended arm and quivering forefinger, he would for a few moments be quite his old self again. Mr. Dillon poured lava-streams of wrathful invective over England and English policy. Evidently the Opposition foresaw the stringency of the measures intended by Government after passing the Address, so they were desperate in their resolve to protract the debate, and thereby postpone the day of action. At that time the process of closure existed indeed, whereby a discussion on any point could be closed under certain conditions by a motion that the question be now put. But it was inefficient in its application, and the Government, with its compact and overpowering majority, had to patiently respect what was mis-called the

freedom of debate. At length, after three weeks debating, the Speaker seemed to consider that, for the character of the House, the Government would be justified in terminating the discussion. Then Mr. W. H. Smith, with admirable promptitude and firmness, though with the blindest and cleverest manner, managed to get the various motions put that resulted in the debate being closed and the Address passed by the 18th of February.

Then the new procedure Rules were produced, of which the principal portion related to the more effective application of closure. The application of it, as heretofore sanctioned, was not strong enough to prevent a gross misuse of the public time. A stronger method was now to be adopted, without which the measures of this Session could never be passed. Even this, however, was not nearly so strong as that which is adopted nowadays. Mr. Parnell with the Nationalists surmised, and with truth, that these procedure Rules were to be the means of passing measures for enforcing law and order in Ireland. To all such measures they applied the generic name of "coercion." In baffled fury they would cry out in effect, "coercion is in

the air ; for us it is a matter of liberty or confinement ; we must resist to the last." Again our men were required to renew their grief ; night after night the same attack, the same defence ; infuriated assaults from the Nationalist quarter, skilful but harmful amendments from the Gladstonian side ; strong replies from our side, and judicious parries from our Leader. When driven back upon their own lines at last, the Nationalist leaders looked like lions at bay. Thus, after another period of three weeks, these Rules were passed and closure rendered moderately, though not fully, effective, by the 18th of March.

By this date a new trouble had supervened for us. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, the Chief Secretary for Ireland, was obliged to resign his high office owing to a temporary affection of eyesight, and he was next in importance after the Leader of the House. Much sympathy was felt by our men for him, suddenly stricken as he was in the heyday of his career, though they hoped that the disability would prove but temporary. An address extensively signed by members of his Party was presented to him on the occasion. The appointment of Mr. Arthur Balfour as his successor caused

surprise at first. Mr. Balfour had always been a popular person, was known to be an intellectually cultured man, and was deemed to be a rising politician, with a connexion that afforded him the utmost advantage. But our men could form no idea whether, as a comparatively untried man, he would be equal to this arduous post in Ireland. They could only hope that the Prime Minister, when making this choice, knew his man.

There had been transitory discontent among our Unionist allies at the slowness of public business. In such a case as this allowance had to be made on both sides. The business of the Opposition was to oppose. In this instance the Government knew that their legislative measures must be intensely distasteful to the Opposition, to whom therefore some latitude should be allowed. There was some sincere resistance which any Opposition had a right to offer. Of the time hitherto consumed, about half was occupied by such legitimate resistance, the other half by interposition calculated to delay the introduction of measures to which the Opposition objected.

Some uneasiness had been felt at reports of Round Table conferences between Mr. Chamberlain

and some of Mr. Gladstone's lieutenants, and especially Sir William Harcourt, with a view to bridging over the rifts which existed. The exact facts were, of course, never known to us; but whatever they were, no sort of reconciliation came about.

A meeting of the Conservative members of both Lords and Commons had been held at the Carlton Club under the presidency of Lord Salisbury himself. Encouraging words were interchanged between him and his followers. In my eyes nothing could exceed the interest of these meetings, which were of high moment to the national policy of that time, and were landmarks in the history of our Party.

Meanwhile the usual progress had been made with the work of Supply. That is, the Supplementary Estimates for the current year had been passed. The strength and pay of the forces for the army and navy had been voted. Lord Charles Beresford's criticism of the naval estimates was redolent of the fresh sea. It only remained to pass a large Vote on Account for some four millions, to enable the Government to carry on the various Civil Services for two months. This Vote was brought forward on the night of Monday,

March the 21st, the Government declaring that it must be passed that very night. The Nationalists were resolved to prevent this if they could, in order to impede the introduction of the Crimes Bill before Easter. They therefore put forth all their obstructive might. This was the first time I had ever seen the employment of Obstruction naked and avowed; and truly it was a marvellous experience. The Nationalists talked on and on by relays of orators all through the hours of the night, with the help of Mr. Labouchere and a knot of Radicals. No sooner was closure applied on one point than debate was started on another. The grey dawn glimmered enough to diversify our lighted chamber, the morning light streamed in; still the debates wore on. Breakfast was taken in the House; some of the all-night sitters went home to bed, and their places were taken by fresh men who had been home for refreshment and had been summoned back. Still the debate waxed stronger and stronger as noonday approached. But then our forces grew and the Nationalist strength waned. At half-past one in the afternoon the Opposition yielded, and the Vote on Account was taken without a division. Some of us had come on duty at the same hour the

day before, and thus were in the House uninterruptedly for twenty-four hours.

After this all-night sitting we had the shortest interval to bathe, dress and lunch before returning to the House to see Mr. W. H. Smith on this Tuesday, March the 22nd, take the first step towards the legislative business of the Session. He moved for urgency, that is precedence over all other business, for the Bill about to be introduced for the amendment of the criminal law in Ireland—commonly called by us the Irish Crimes Bill, and by our opponents the Coercion Bill. This preliminary stage must needs be passed. Mr. John Morley, on behalf of the Opposition, moved that the House do refuse to receive this, which they called the coercive Bill, until the Land Bill, or the remedial measure, should be before the House. This was of course an absolutely obstructive motion; nevertheless it occupied the House for the rest of the week. During this debate Mr. Balfour won his spurs as Irish Secretary. Mr. Goschen, too, vindicated the high position to which the Unionist Party had raised him, and gave promise of that debating power which was to be tried successfully in many a coming contest. Sir Henry James spoke

on our side with his usual dignity and impressiveness. Mr. Chamberlain too made an elaborate and useful speech, which cheered us by the certainty that he had formally separated himself from Mr. Gladstone's policy regarding Ireland, and that he was as firm as ever on the Unionist side. On the Gladstonian side I observed for the first time a new speaker who addressed us with much forcefulness, and he was Mr. Herbert Asquith, a man destined to rise to a high position in his Party. The division affirming urgency took place on the night of Friday the 25th. From some accidental cause our majority, which was nominally over a hundred, was found to be ninety, whereon Sir William Harcourt tried to pretend that with a falling majority the Government had no chance of passing the Bill !

Thus it was not till Monday, the 28th of March, that Mr Balfour as Chief Secretary was able to move the First Reading of the Irish Crimes Bill. This was after an announcement from Mr. W. H. Smith that the Government considered the Bill as vital, and had staked their own existence on it. Mr. Balfour's speech was of course well and carefully delivered ; but constant interruption from the Nationalist Members

impaired its effect, and sometimes gave it an air of abruptness or incoherence. It presented an elaborate indictment of the Nationalist Party, with a long string of counts setting forth all its alleged misdeeds, which were classified under the various heads of terrorism, intimidation and unlawful conspiracy! He declared that the written and visible law of the State was set at naught, and that the unwritten law of the National League, with its unseen agency, was alone obeyed. The most noteworthy feature in his plan was this, that in any district which might have been proclaimed by the Lord Lieutenant these offences might be tried by two Resident Magistrates, subject to an appeal to the County Court Judges. This mode of trial was necessary, inasmuch as trial by jury in these districts for these offences had become a perverse farce. It was violently seized upon by the Opposition, and the Resident Magistrates were covered with invective, mainly because from the nature of their office they were removable by the Executive; and in the mouths of the Nationalists the word 'removable' became a term of bitter reproach.

During Mr. Balfour's oration we beheld with amusement Mr. Gladstone suppressing his anger till

he was nearly exploding. Rising to speak the next day he looked like a grand old lion lashing his flanks in fury, as he declared that the Bill would fix upon Ireland a permanent brand of inferiority. But when the heat of oratory had cooled, we asked ourselves what was the gravamen of this denunciation on his part? It could not be in the main provisions of the Bill—proclamation, mode of trial, tribunal and the like—for he had himself carried even more severe and drastic measures for Ireland within recent years. It could only be in this—that whereas his special measures were enacted for a specified term, no such term was fixed for this special measure. This was an essential difference indeed. But it need subsist only while the Unionist Government might last, which could hardly be for ever; and it could be abolished if a Gladstonian Ministry should be formed. It therefore was not such a reason as would render this measure iniquitous while the previous measures were admissible. The white-heat of the wrath, with which it was urged, only proved the wondrous capacity for indignation which the Opposition Leader possessed. On his side a speech was made by Mr. Dillon breathing fury throughout. On our

side noteworthy contributions to debate were afforded by Mr. Goschen and by Sir Richard Webster, the Attorney-General.

Early in the afternoon of Friday, April the 1st, there was a Party meeting at the Foreign Office, Lord Salisbury presiding. Mr. W. H. Smith warned us that no Easter Recess could be afforded, that we must sit till the eve of Good Friday, and resume work on the afternoon following Easter Monday. The public exigency compelled willing acquiescence from us all. The Liberal Unionists held simultaneously a meeting assuring us of their support. In the House Mr. W. H. Smith announced amidst the enthusiastic cheering of the whole Party that the Easter Holidays would be abandoned in the national service.

On the night of that very same day (Friday, April the 1st) the Crimes Bill was read for the first time. After repeated attempts at adjournment the closure was moved and carried, amidst some cries of "tyranny" from the Opposition. Mr. Gladstone had taken a personal part in these movements, and seemed to regard the closure as directed against himself. He sailed with stately motion down the House towards the "no" lobby

with an air of lofty indignation, passing the Irish quarter on his way. Thereon the Nationalists stood up, waving their hats, and giving him an ovation. The spectacle was as picturesque as it was irregular. When the majority of 108 for closure was declared we expected a division on the First Reading. But no; Mr. Gladstone left the House in a somewhat theatrical manner, followed by all his men; Mr. Parnell did the same with his men; the combined Party seemed thereby to imply a mute protest. Irritated by the angry discussions which had been raging since the previous day, our men pursued their retreating opponents with laughter. Being thus left in undisputed mastery, the Unionists, within a very few minutes, read the Bill a first time at three o'clock in the morning, and fixed the Second Reading for the following Tuesday.

Accordingly on that Tuesday, in Passion week, the Second Reading was moved by Mr. Balfour, amidst a murmur from the Opposition which nearly approached a growl. The first note of Opposition was sounded by Sir Charles Russell, in a speech very able, of course, but forensic rather than political. During the debate which followed, Sir

Edward Clarke, the Solicitor-General, made a senatorial oration of real force and dignity.

On the Thursday following, the House adjourned in the afternoon, to re-assemble the following Tuesday in Easter week.

On Easter Tuesday, April the 12th, the Second Reading stage of the Irish Crimes Bill was resumed, and the debate lasted till the 19th. During this week there were some of those striking episodes which shook Parliament to its very basis, and made its well-wishers tremble for a moment. Colonel Saunderson (of North Armagh) was resolved to expose what he believed to be the real character of the National League. This he did in a grandly emphatic manner. In the course of his speech he argued on grounds shown, that certain Nationalist members, sitting on the Benches opposite to him, had associated with men whom they ought to have known to be murderers; the crimes having been presumably committed in the Nationalist cause. The charge, though cruelly grave, was so conveyed that the Speaker, when appealed to by Mr. Timothy Healy and Mr. Sexton, could not rule it out of order, but remarked that its answer might follow in debate. Thereon Mr. Healy rose and

gave Colonel Saunderson the lie direct, across the House. Instantly he was required by the Speaker to withdraw the words. He refused, and was thereon named to the House. Then Mr. W. H. Smith, as Leader, moved the suspension of Mr. Healy for a week, which motion was carried after a division. Mr. Healy being then ordered to withdraw from the House, walked out in dramatic style, the Nationalists standing up in their places, waving their hats and cheering him on his exit. Nothing daunted by all this, Colonel Saunderson proceeded with his speech and his accusations. Thereon Mr. Sexton flung across the House words similar to those which had come from Mr. Healy. We apprehended that Mr. Sexton would bring himself also under suspension, However, by conciliatory interposition, the Speaker contrived to avert that. This event occurred on the night of Friday the 15th.

These scenes inside the House were connected, as usual, with events outside. The *London Times* had published, and was still publishing, a series of articles entitled "Parnellism and Crime." The Nationalist members, being more or less mentioned in these articles, might have been expected to

bring an action against the newspaper, but they excused themselves in the House from doing so, on the strange ground that they hardly expected justice from a London jury. On the morning of Monday the 18th, the day fixed for the Second Reading of the Crimes Bill, the *Times* published the facsimile of a letter purporting to be from Mr. Parnell himself, virtually connecting him, by sympathy at least, with the criminal party, and especially implying condonation of the murder of Mr. Burke in Phoenix Park in May, 1882. During the debate that evening Mr. Parnell declared the letter to be a forgery, with an explicit denial of all that it implied, and with an affirmation of his innocence. He said nothing, however, about proceeding against the newspaper for libel. He abstained, indeed, from proceeding, and this abstinence told against him in our estimation. In the same debate Lord Hartington pressed the same point, not making the charges himself, but urging that they had been made, and had not been answered.

*Amid
later*

Towards midnight Mr. Gladstone soared in his oratorical flight. His reticence regarding the alleged criminality of the National League was unsatisfactory. But as he warmed with his denun-

ciation of the Conservatives, he fell rapidly into difficulties. He had in those days a way with our men which they could not brook. He would, with outstretched forefinger, point his argument at them, and put the most challenging interrogations, evidently meaning to make them sit dumfounded with dismay in uneasy silence under his lash. They would instantly retaliate with volleys of "no, no," or other ejaculations. He would then complain of interruption; but he had really brought it on his own head.

After a week of the fiercest fencing, rapier-like thrusts and counter-thrusts, lunges, and all other devices known to the art of logomachy, the Bill was read a second time at two o'clock in the morning of the 19th; amidst cheers in the Chamber itself, which were soon taken up by many loyalist circles in the precincts.

Mr. Goschen's first Budget was delivered, on the 21st, with authoritative knowledge, and yet in a pleasant, humorous style that cast an air of fancy over the rugged figures. The results were the first of his several remissions of the Income Tax (this remission being a penny in the pound), and concessions in some detail to the agriculturist. During

the debate Lord Randolph Churchill severely attacked the Budget, declaring that his hopes of retrenchment by the Tory Party were shattered, and concurring in various strictures made by Mr. Gladstone! All this was cheered by the Gladstonians, and received in the coldest silence by our men.

The Budget having been passed, it was proposed on the 26th of April that the House should go into Committee on the Crimes Bill. But at the outset Mr. Gladstone objected to proceeding with this stage, on the ground that this, being a coercive and repressive measure, ought not to proceed till the remedial measure, namely, the Land Bill, now running its course through the Lords, should be received in the Commons. This was nothing less than a futile plea for delaying the Crimes Bill, urged with the full knowledge that any such delay would be fatal to the Bill. This plea, after some controversy, was rejected.

On Thursday, the 29th of April, the House at last succeeded in going into Committee on the Bill. Already more than three hundred amendments were on the notice paper. But before the House could set to work, a delay of nearly four days was caused

by an attempt to treat the conduct of the *Times* in publishing "Parnellism and Crime" as a breach of the privilege of the House, and by a further attempt to have the affair investigated by a Committee of the House. Both these attempts were defeated. Words fail me to describe the tedium of the course on which we had to embark. Now there set in that "dreary drip of dilatory declamation" described by one of our leaders. Mr. Gladstone was understood by us to have given the "*mot d'ordre*," by saying that he thought the Bill would break down in Committee.

The resistance offered by the Nationalists was at the time designated as obstruction. But this designation would hardly do justice to the case. The process was, in the first instance, desperate, uncompromising opposition. It was not unconquerable, as its conquest was actually effected. It was undoubtedly genuine, for its managers foresaw that by this measure all their revolutionary schemes would be frustrated, and that some of their own number would cause themselves to be cast into prison. They were heard occasionally to avow their anticipation to that effect. It was natural, nay inevitable, that with such views they

should strive with all their might to hamper, to frustrate, to neutralise the provisions of the Bill. This might of theirs was directed by an ingenuity and an assiduity that extorted a sort of admiration, even from us. Mr. Parnell was mostly absent owing to ill-health ; but his henchmen, Mr. Sexton and others, did their possible. The labouring oar was, however, worked by the brothers Healy, Timothy and Maurice. The ingenuity of Maurice, himself a lawyer, in devising amendments, was such that I have seldom seen equalled and never surpassed in its way. By degrees this opposition degenerated into obstruction in the pettiest details. When complaints were openly made of this, Mr. Gladstone suggested, under the garb of a compromise, that the scope of the Bill should be restricted to the more heinous classes of crime. This suggestion was wholly inadmissible, inasmuch as it would more than half destroy the Bill. Such restriction would weaken the operation of the measure as against boycotting or other kinds of terrorism, and against the Plan of Campaign or other forms of unlawful conspiracy. Despite everything, the Government succeeded in making substantial progress before Whitsuntide. But the

pace was much too slow, if the Bill was to be passed by a date sufficiently early to allow the remedial legislation, that is, the Land Bill, to be carried. The Nationalists, knowing this full well, redoubled their obstructive efforts. When asked when the Crimes Bill would at this rate emerge from Committee, they would sarcastically reply "Next year, next year!" an expression equivalent to the Greek kalends.

The only agreeable break in this arduous routine was the preliminary celebration on Sunday, the 22nd of May, of the Queen's Jubilee. Some 450 Members of the House followed the Speaker in procession to St. Margaret's Church, which is the ancient church of the Commons. We assembled in our own Chamber, then formed a procession in Westminster Hall; the two rival Leaders, Mr. W. H. Smith and Mr. Gladstone, being the first pair. Our road to the church was lined by the Westminster Volunteers under the command of one of our own Members, Col. Howard Vincent. The eloquent and historic sermon was preached by Dr. Boyd Carpenter, Bishop of Ripon. The absolution was pronounced by the Archbishop of York, and the benediction, in the most impressive tones, by the Archbishop of

Canterbury. The congregation that day was one of the most interesting that had ever met together within those time-honoured walls.

We reassembled on Monday, June the 6th, after a short Whitsuntide Recess, and that very day Mr. W. H. Smith was pressed by his followers to fix a time by which the Irish Crimes Bill must be passed through its stages. On the following day, the 7th, the Committee stage was resumed, and the Nationalists were intent on obstruction in detail. It was, however, understood that their Leaders would deprecate this. Accordingly, Sir William Harcourt, in a very judicious speech, advised them to fight only the important points and to cease from worrying in detail. Mr. Parnell, re-appearing after a temporary retirement, spoke to the same effect. I had not seen him in his place since the 18th of April, when he repudiated the famous letter—and now, *quantum mutatus ab illo!* The form was still handsome and stately, the carriage still erect. But the wan features, the pallid cheek, the shrunken form, the saddened expression, the low voice, indicated internal malady. He acknowledged that the work of opposition had up to Whitsuntide been unavoidably left by him to his colleagues; but he

now counselled moderation in opposing. It was amusing to watch the countenance of Mr. Timothy Healy while his Leader was speaking. He evidently did not mean to follow these counsels. And he shortly made one of his fiercest speeches, in diction and imagery quite terrible. During the next two days the obstruction waxed worse than ever. On the Thursday, Mr. W. H. Smith gave notice that on the next day, Friday the 10th, he would propose a Resolution. This he accordingly did, to the effect that after the lapse of just a week, namely, on Friday the 17th, whatever clauses of the Bill might then remain should be put to the vote one after another *en bloc*, clause by clause; whereby the Committee stage would be over that night. He proposed this drastic, though necessary, measure in tones so gentle as to be almost dulcet. The half-suppressed ejaculations of disgust from the Nationalists formed a sort of accompaniment. Mr. Parnell, with ghastly aspect and enfeebled voice, moved the rejection of this Resolution. It was, however, but slightly opposed by Mr. Gladstone, and about two o'clock in the morning it was passed. But our troubles for that night were not over. A formal motion had to be

made for the Committee to sit the next Monday. Avowedly in revenge for passing the Resolution, some Nationalists and Radicals tried to carry on the discussion through the night into Saturday afternoon, in order to prevent our attending the Naval Review at Portsmouth. This was done, too, notwithstanding the Speaker's admonition that the debate was being conducted in a manner unworthy of the House of Commons. Fortunately there were enough men still sitting up to form a quorum for applying the closure, and so we were able to adjourn before four o'clock in the morning.

The next week there would be still five days or nights for the Committee stage. The Nationalists might at their will make the best of that time by urging only their most important amendments. Or they might make the worst of it by going on with all the trivial amendments which filled the notice paper; and this was the course they pursued. The last evening fully available for their work in Committee was taken up by them for a discussion on some particular evictions, and was thus actually diverted from the Crimes Bill. The next day, Friday, the precincts of the House presented that beehive appearance which is always perceptible

when any historic event is about to happen. The Committee work moved along as the hours wore on till half-past nine, when Sir Charles Russell was chosen by the Nationalists to say the last word for them. Our men were assembling in a merry mood before the climax, when Sir Charles Russell began to declaim. They greeted his fine sentences with ironical cheers, and he was pointing at them with quivering forefinger, when another sound was heard in the Chamber. It was the first stroke of ten from the great Clock Tower—the fateful hour for the Bill. One very seldom hears the clock strike in the busy Chamber, but that night our nerves were so strained that we heard every stroke. As the tenth stroke was over, Mr. Courtney, the Chairman, rose and Sir Charles Russell sat down. We were then at the end of the 6th clause, and that clause was put to the vote. The Nationalists all rose in their seats; the Chairman requested them to resume their seats. They did not do so, and we feared that a disturbance was in store for us. But no; they were rising only in order to leave the House in a body; and they took no part in the division which immediately followed. The Opposition lobby was occupied by Gladstonians

only, but after the division they also left the House, which remained in possession of the Unionists alone. Such a position was for us a new sensation. Then Clause 7 was put, and was answered by a loud volley of "ayes" from us, making the roof resound ; but the "noes" were silent. The remaining clauses, to the very end, followed. Before half-past ten the Speaker was sent for, and, as he ascended the throne, we cheered heartily. Mr. Courtney then reported that the Bill had passed through Committee.

In the twinkling of an eye the scene changed. The Clerk at the table read out the remaining Orders of the day. The House proceeded in the coolest and quietest manner to despatch a mass of financial business—every point being noticed succinctly and practically, not a moment being wasted. Between one and two o'clock in the morning we adjourned, congratulating ourselves on having been able to do a night's useful work instead of marching up and down the division lobbies or quelling disorder.

The Queen's Jubilee was celebrated on Tuesday, the 21st of June. We sat up very late on the Monday night, and then adjourned over the

Tuesday. I walked home to bed in broad daylight on the Tuesday morning, through St. James's Park to St. James's Street. On the way I found the multitudes already beginning to arrive and to take up their places on the sides of the streets, and on various vantage grounds for viewing the spectacle some hours later. In Westminster Abbey, the gallery for the Members of the Commons was on the left side of the Royal dais, near the Altar. There is no scope in this Parliamentary narrative for describing the beautiful, solemn and touching scene inside the Abbey, the like of which had never before been beheld by the spectators and will never be seen by them again. The ceremony in the interior being over, I had time to see the Royal and Imperial procession as it left the Abbey on its return homewards. The heroic form of the Crown Prince of Germany was conspicuous with the white uniform; and I little thought that just a year afterwards the news of his death would be solemnly recited in our House of Commons. Immediately after the ceremony in the Abbey, the Members of the Commons and their families met in the hospitable dining-rooms of the House.

The following day, Wednesday the 22nd, the

House proceeded with the Coal Mines Regulation Bill, the Members looking quite fresh after the pleasurable and auspicious avocations of the preceding day.

Before the end of June we were becoming much tried by nocturnal labours. The summer was more than usually fine; the cool nights and the lovely dawns did indeed mitigate our trials. Still on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, we never went to bed at night. Instead of that, we went home at dawn or sunrise, and retired to rest by broad daylight. Further, it was impossible for us as politicians to avoid attending, on Wednesdays and Saturdays, the public occasions or social ceremonies that lasted to late hours in the night. My own lodgings being in St. James's Place, I used to walk home at daybreak through St. James's Park in company with Admiral Mayne (Member for Pembroke), who lodged in the same locality. He used to beguile our walk with stories of maritime adventure off Cape Horn and Terra del Fuego. We thus knew, as few of our countrymen ever get to know, the balmy freshness of a summer's morn in England. The exquisite air seemed to blow away the cobwebs that had

gathered round our brains during the night's work. The amber sky, behind the Horse-Guards and the Admiralty, heralded the sunrise. The sylvan island and the wooded banks had their counterparts on the glassy surface, as we crossed the bridge over the water that adorns the Park.

In those days, during the dinner hour, it was usual for the Opposition to move for a count, which compelled us Ministerialists to rush to the Chamber to be counted. This process used to be called "ringing the Tories up from dinner!"

The Jubilee celebration was, of course, a landmark in the Session. After an interval, on Monday, the 27th of June, the Irish Crimes Bill, already passed through Committee, was brought up on the Report stage. The intention is that at this stage the finishing touches should be put to a Bill before it is produced for the third and final reading. But evidently it is possible so to multiply and elaborate these touches as virtually to revise the whole measure. Accordingly the Nationalists began to do that with this Bill. On the Monday they produced a crop of amendments, and these were disposed of; but by the next day, Tuesday, a fresh crop had sprung up. That night, however, Mr. W. H. Smith gave notice

that on Tuesday, the 4th of July, at seven o'clock, this impediment would be removed, and that all amendments then remaining would be summarily disposed of. This Resolution was moved on Thursday, the 30th of June, was opposed by Mr. Dillon in a short speech teeming with hostility and abounding in menace, but was immediately carried by a division. We supposed that the rest of that evening, the next day Friday, and the following Monday up to seven o'clock, would be occupied by the Nationalists with their amendments. But, no; a glad surprise was in store for us. After the division, neither the Nationalists nor the Gladstonians returned to their places; and now, as on the 17th June, we Unionists were left in possession of the House. The amendments were all put, and were not challenged; the few which belonged to the Government were accepted, the rest were rejected summarily. In a few minutes this formidable Report stage was over. Looking up we saw that the Members' gallery, on the Opposition side, was filled by the Nationalists, placidly regarding the strange scene going on below. Apparently they deemed it to be more dramatic and dignified for them to do this, than to await the drastic process ordained for the 4th of July.

It was now eight o'clock, and a good six hours remained for work—what a golden opportunity! Instantly the House, filled only with the working bees, and free from drones and obstructors, displayed all its best qualities, and braced itself for a night's work of real legislation. After various financial measures had been cleared off, a heavy measure for consolidating the whole Criminal procedure of Scotland was passed through Committee. Then followed several lesser measures, relating to Scotch crofters, to early closing of shops, to garden allotments, and the like. We went on till past two o'clock in the morning, and walked home by daylight, after the best night's work I had yet seen in Parliament.

The Third Reading of the Irish Crimes Bill was moved on Thursday the 7th of July, and carried on the following day after a full-dress debate, in which the oratorical giants on both sides figured as usual. As the last of the perorations had been uttered in a crowded House, and as the final division was about to be taken, one choleric patriot among the Nationalists, in a voice half-choked from wrath, and with arms trembling under excitement, contrived to utter a few sentences of gratitude to

the Gladstonians and execration against the Unionists.

Thus after much tribulation the first great measure was over, namely, that for enforcing law and order in Ireland. The next measure still remained, namely, that for remedial legislation in respect to the land, and not a moment was lost in bringing this forward. On the following Monday, July the 11th, Mr. Balfour moved the Second Reading of the Irish Land Bill, which had come to us passed by the Lords after full discussion. Its main object was to render unjust or unduly harsh evictions impossible, by affording the tenants considerate terms respecting arrears, with full and reasonable time within which to satisfy the minimum of their just dues. The measure was beneficent in its intent and in its effect, so far as these might go, and the Gladstonians had to admit that much. Even the Nationalists could not deny its merits up to a certain point, though they might claim that it should go further. One of them actually said that some parts of it would "do an enormous amount of good." Nevertheless they joined in disparagement of the Bill; and Sir William Harcourt, especially, enveloped it in a thick veil of sarcasm. I heard an

eminent Gladstonian say it would be so cut about in the Commons, that nothing would remain save its title page to show that it came from the Lords! We were driven to the inference that the Opposition did not wish to see improvements for Ireland proffered by us. They naturally wished to place us in the position of having passed coercive measures and then failing to pass remedial measures. We were equally desirous of avoiding that position. The Liberal Unionists supported us loyally at this stage. Mr. Chamberlain declared that the Bill, though not pretending to be perfect, was excellent so far as it went, and was more generous than anything that had ever been offered by any Liberal Government.

At this stage Lord Randolph Churchill intervened, rising amidst the cheers of our men, who understood that he had come to bless the Bill. So, indeed, he did at first; but soon he began to criticize and to adopt the part of a candid friend to such an extent that he seemed to our men to be almost cursing the measure. So when he resumed his seat there was no cheering from them. Certainly his attitude at that moment caused them anxiety. This was strengthened by what followed from

Sir William Harcourt. He had quite recently been denouncing Lord Randolph Churchill as one who had once been the head of a party of four, and was thereafter, in company with Mr. Chamberlain, forming a national party of two. But now he highly approved of the speech just delivered, and was full of smiles for "the Noble Lord."

Mr. Goschen wound up the debate for us by a brilliant speech, in which he used, in reference to the self-evicted tenants, the famous phrase of "political theatricals on the open hillside."

On the night of Thursday, the 14th of July, the Opposition allowed the Bill to be read a second time without a division. Our men had mustered in full strength, expecting to carry the Second Reading by a great majority.

At this time we felt like railway travellers who, passing through a long tunnel, begin to see daylight at the end of the dark vista. The Conservative Members were in good spirits and entertained their Whips, Mr. Akers Douglas and Colonel (afterwards Sir William) Walrond, at a banquet in the Crystal Palace. This was a noteworthy compliment to the vigilance, assiduity, and popularity with which these gentlemen had discharged their

duties, always more or less delicate and often harassing, with a success that was admitted, perhaps regretfully, by our opponents. Some 215 Members attended the banquet. Multitudes of sightseers came to witness the Tories proceeding to entertain their Whips.

When our Land Bill passed the Second Reading successfully and without a division, we little thought that we were really standing on the brink of a political precipice. Notwithstanding that our Liberal Unionist allies had supported us in the Second Reading, they insisted on certain amendments in the Bill as essential to the maintaining of the alliance. Some of these amendments could be readily accepted. But there was one which could not be accepted without a great sacrifice of Conservative opinion, and that was the revision of judicial rents. In 1881 these rents had been forced upon the landlords against their will by legislation, and had been fixed at a large reduction by a tribunal for fifteen years; the reduced standard of rent being thus determined as a sort of judicial covenant for that term. A revision with a view to reduction, after six years only had passed, was a clear breach of public agreement. There was consequently

doubt as to whether the Conservative Party could be induced to consent.

As a storm-signal, we were summoned to a gathering of the Party to meet the Prime Minister in the Library of the Carlton Club on the 19th of July. The objections to the new demand for revision of judicial rents were frankly admitted; on the other hand, the dangers of breaking up our alliance with the Liberal Unionists were made equally clear to us. I remember trembling, as I listened, for the fate of my Party, and, indeed, of my country; reflecting rapidly on the fearful confusion which might ensue if the Salisbury Ministry should have to retire. Our men, however, loyally acquiesced, despite all their natural reluctance. The fact was that British landlords had year by year, ever since 1880, been suffering perhaps greater reductions of rent than their Irish brethren, and this without any interposition from the Legislature.

After the clearance of this threatening difficulty, the Land Bill entered on the Committee stage on the 25th of July. It was stoutly resisted and persistently impeded by the Opposition at almost every point. Lord Randolph Churchill once more offered

criticism in terms which were loudly cheered from the Opposition Benches. Mr. Chamberlain again spoke up manfully for us in one of the finest debating efforts I ever witnessed. Among other things, he said that the Bill was "magnificent," and the most generous measure of concession to the Irish tenants that had ever been introduced by any Party or any Government. The Committee stage was closed on Wednesday, the 3rd of August. The Report stage was taken on Friday, the 5th, and concluded the next day by a Saturday's sitting. Thereupon it was read a third time straightway and passed, as Mr. W. H. Smith declared that unless the Third Reading was taken then and there, the safety of the measure might be imperilled.

By this time the House had fallen into a very backward state respecting Supply. Many Votes for the Army and Navy remained. In the branch of military administration some important discussions were raised by Mr. Hanbury, who, though a civilian, quite established his position as a critic in these affairs. Lord Randolph Churchill also attacked the ship-building policy all round, apparently intending thereby to complete the cycle of criticism which he had announced at the beginning

of the Session. But progress in Supply was laboriously and steadily effected.

Some precious time was worse than wasted by lamentable and miserable episodes arising out of disorder on the part of Nationalist Members, despite the praiseworthy efforts of the Speaker as peacemaker. It seemed that the wear and tear of controversy was producing nervous irritability. This tendency, too, was aggravated by the nocturnal vigils, for more scenes occurred during the small hours of the morning than at any other time.

By the middle of August the Session seemed interminable, and the various movements were impeded by obstruction all along the line of Parliamentary business. For such an *impasse* there is sure to be an underlying reason. In this case the reason lay in the question whether the National League should be proclaimed under the recently passed Crimes Act. We Conservatives thought that this should certainly be done at once; because if the proclamation were not issued while Parliament was sitting, the issue must be deferred till the next Session. In that case the League might work its unruly will during the Recess, in defiance of the

Crimes Act, which could be executed only in districts which had been proclaimed. The path of duty and policy was to our mind as clear as daylight. To proclaim or not to proclaim, that was the question; and we were for proclaiming. If the Government took one line or the other, the prevailing obstruction might be removed. They might say at once that they would give the League till next Session a chance of behaving well without compulsion; whereon the Nationalist Party would at once cease from obstructing. Or they might at once proceed to proclaim and to fight the matter out. When this was over, the Nationalist Party, having done its worst in vain, would have lost the motive for obstruction. But for a while the Ministers were obliged to halt between two opinions, and that halting was the very thing to encourage the Nationalist Party in obstruction, in order to influence the decision. In the first place the Government desired to secure the passing of the Land Bill through the Commons before proceeding against the League. In the second place, some of the Liberal Unionist leaders were against the policy of proclaiming, on the ground that sufficient proof of misdoing was not available against the League.

The Conservatives, however, continued their pressure on the Prime Minister, who kept his own counsel till the moment of action arrived. On Thursday the 18th of August Mr. Parnell, with gaunt aspect and hollow voice, but with a mien indicating unconquerable will, made a speech of utter defiance against the British Power to the bitter end. On the afternoon of the very next day a question was asked whether Lord Salisbury had just intimated to the Lords the proclamation of the National League in certain districts. Thereon Mr. Balfour rose with studied quietude, and read out a copy of the Proclamation which had that day been issued in Dublin. When our ringing cheers had subsided, he took the Nationalist bull by the horns, and said that the following Thursday would be allotted for any challenge which the Nationalist Members might desire to offer. These gentlemen were all in their places ; they seemed dazed and taken aback, and some few flurried queries followed. But the thing was done irrevocably, and nothing remained for them except protestation.

On the Thursday, Mr. Gladstone formally moved to revoke the Proclamation on the ground that no

information had been supplied to the House regarding the alleged misdoing of the League. He unwittingly did the utmost disservice to the League by this challenge. For Mr. Balfour had come primed with a mass of allegations regarding the magical despotism exercised by the League in a variety of weird and ghost-like forms. This official information was supplemented by Mr. T. W. Russell with a string of un-official facts. Then Mr. Robertson (the Scotch Solicitor-General) raised his reputation as a debater by a humorous and picturesque analysis of the League and its ways—its proceedings on Sundays in church, “something between a commination and a confessional” — its self-constituted courts acting from two sides, one “civil,” the other “criminal.” He alluded to the consideration that might arise in respect to property, to subsistence, to personal safety. The debate lasting over the next day caused Sir Richard Webster, our Attorney-General, to make a speech which also confirmed his reputation as a debater, comprising an additional indictment against the League, with numerous counts. Mr. Goschen wound up the debate with yet another indictment. Never before or since have I seen such a catalogue as this of accusations

against an organized body which made but a moderate attempt to rebut, deny, or palliate. The principal answer given by some of the Nationalist leaders was to the effect that, on the other hand, the League had redressed wrongs and stopped oppression. Lord Hartington spoke for us, but regretted apparently that the Proclamation had been issued. He and his friends voted with us in the division. Mr. Chamberlain did not speak, but he and his friends voted against us in the division. Nevertheless we had a good majority of seventy-eight. The result must, we thought, be embarrassing to the Opposition. For not only was the character of the League gravely concerned in this exposition of the case, but the Gladstonian Party had identified itself with the vindication of that body.

Thus the great fence had been cleared before the end of August. There still remained to be done — first, the passing of many Votes in Supply; second, the completion of two Bills, both acknowledged to be beneficent and non-contentious, namely, the Regulation of Mines and the Labourers' Allotments. Regarding the two Bills no real difficulty arose. The Bill for Regulation of Mines had long been in progress during the summer, and

Mr. Matthews, the Home Secretary, had displayed consummate ability and knowledge in arguing or disposing of the countless details in this complex measure. Mr. Ritchie, as President of the Local Government Board, piloted the Bill for Labourers' Allotments with an ability which gave an earnest of the success he was to attain in future Sessions. The power conferred by the Bill on local authorities of compelling landowners to give land for these allotments was indeed a grave innovation. But our men acquiesced in it, partly because of the representations made by Sir Edward Birkbeck and other Members from the Eastern counties.

Still the Supply business remained, and if from any hostile motive the Nationalists should protract it well into September, could the Government—we anxiously asked each other—keep their men together? The tendency which usually drives men away at this season might prove quite irresistible now, when we were over-fatigued by nocturnal vigils. After all we had endured during the summer, we were still being kept up every night till near morning—indeed all-night sittings were not uncommon. Sometimes, when we had in the absence of the Nationalist Members despatched much

business till 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning, these gentlemen would return to the House and trouble us for an hour or two more. If the number of our men in attendance should dwindle day by day, the Government might be like a derelict, dismasted ship tossing helplessly in the waves of obstruction. This extremity, however, was happily, though narrowly, averted.

There were indeed three circumstances, incidental to that time and likely to cause trouble. One was a dangerous political meeting on a Sunday, at Ennis, which had to be prohibited. Another was the prosecution of Mr. William O'Brien for a violent speech. A third, happening most inopportunately, was the conflict at Mitchelstown between the police and the rioters, which Mr. Gladstone afterwards commemorated by the phrase "Remember Mitchelstown." The excitement of these incidents was day by day reflected in our debates. So the Supply business ran like a cumbrous waggon rolling and rumbling over stones. The Third Reading of the Appropriation Bill, as the crowning measure of the Session, was reached on Tuesday, the 13th of September: and the closing scene was characteristic. Mr. Parnell came in, daintily dressed in fawn-

coloured summer costume, and looking much better in health. His voice was somewhat weak at times, but he addressed us in the best style of his palmy days, with dignified diction and with the gesticulation of an accomplished actor. He had a quiverful of Parthian arrows, which he discharged one by one. He denounced us for having supported the Government, he defied us to extinguish the National League or to suppress its meetings, he declared that the Crimes Act would be used not against criminals or real offenders, but against political opponents.

That night we were released from attendance, and the House adjourned till the following Friday, when the closing ceremonies would take place.

Such was the end of this truly tremendous Session, which must, we all felt, be the last of its kind. To recall the events of it, is indeed *infandum renovare dolorem*. Certainly some, perhaps many, of us, intimated to Mr. W. H. Smith that we would not, indeed could not, endure any more of such Sessions, and that, if we were to continue in attendance as heretofore, some favourable alterations in the Rules must be made. From the end of January till the middle of September we never,

except during two very brief intervals, had proper rest at night. Too often we had but very slight rest, and sometimes no rest at all. This acted injuriously on the nerves, rendering them more than ordinarily susceptible to the irritation of ceaseless controversy. In the debates of this Session there was ever a sort of fierceness, which excited those from whom it proceeded, and angered those against whom it was directed. A further aggravation was caused by the anxiety and uncertainty as to when and how we should be released; the hope deferred, brightening one day, darkening the next; the impossibility of making any private engagements, or the enforced breaking up of those already made. This process, designedly employed against us by the Opposition as the means of extorting political concessions, was described at the time by them as a thumb-screw, and by one of our Leaders as "mental torture."

During this Session few reputations were newly made, but the foundation was laid of several reputations which in future Sessions were destined to be great indeed—such as the instances of Mr. Goschen, Mr. Balfour, Mr. Ritchie, Sir Richard Webster, Sir Edward Clarke, Lord Advocate Robertson, and

others. In nearly every Session, that I shall have to describe, there will be a hero. In this Session the hero was undoubtedly Mr. W. H. Smith. He began it with no particular repute at all, he ended it with a repute of the utmost weight. It is hard to imagine a leader more suave and urbane in manner, yet more firm and unflinching in action. The Opposition used to say that he would make the most severe and urgent proposals with smiling amiability. Some of them dubbed him "Old Morality," because he always concluded his requests to the House by an appeal to its sense of duty. For all that, he was comparatively popular with them. He never produced a long speech, but he made countless short speeches with unfailing good humour and unfaltering firmness. We deemed him the most fortunate of politicians, considering the moderate claims he originally had to the highest promotion, the magnitude of the office he had held, and the success with which he had borne himself therein. As he went home for the last time this Session, how many thoughts incidental to humanity must have crowded on his mind ! Although his cast of thought was probably simple and unimaginative, still when he looked back

on the trials of the wintry spring before Easter, the ennui between Easter and Whitsuntide, the Parliamentary struggles of midsummer, the legislative dangers of the later summer—all ending wonderfully well early in the autumn with a noble record of legislative achievement—no one of the six hundred and seventy Members of the House of Commons had so good a right to be proud, or so strong a reason to be thankful, as he.*

CHAPTER VI.

SESSION OF 1888.

Meeting of Parliament, February 9th—Debate on the Address in response to the Queen's speech, concluded February 24th—Mr. Goschen's plan for reducing the interest on the National Debt, March 9th—Mr. Ritchie introduces Bill for Local Government in England, March 19th—The Budget on 26th—Second Reading of the Local Government Bill, April 20th—The Bill in Committee, June 7th—Prospect of the Session clouded over—Announcement on July 9th of Autumn Sitting—Local Government Bill read third time, July 27th—Proceedings relating to "Parnellism and Crime"—Bill for constituting the Parnell Commission passed August 9th—August 13th, Parliament adjourned till November—Re-assembling November 6th for business of Supply—Extension of Ashbourne Act for Ireland—Supply concluded, and Parliament prorogued, December 24th.

ON Thursday, the 9th of February (1888), I saw for the fourth time a Session opened in the House of Commons. The gathering of the old Parliamentary hands in the outer lobby was a real amusement, with the cordial greetings and recognitions, the fresh and happy looks, the bloom on men's faces after the Recess—a flush soon, however, destined to fade with work.

As regards the outlook for the Session, we felt a restful confidence unknown on previous occasions.

The allied Party of Conservatives and Liberal Unionists — calling itself generally the Unionist Party—had won its spurs by vanquishing the Irish difficulty, for a term of years at least. It had also fledged its wings for a bold flight into purely British legislation. We looked forward to a tolerably comfortable Session, from the opening onwards. Nothing was further from our contemplation or anticipation than the ending in store for us. Nowhere is the uncertainty of human hopes better inculcated as a moral lesson, than within the walls of the House of Commons!

We learned from the Queen's Speech that our attention would be, in the first place, invited to the Local Government of England. As usual, several other measures were included in the Royal Message, and among them some important proposals relating to Scotland. It was seen immediately that we should not, in this year, advance beyond the reconstruction of Local Government in England and Wales.

The Address in response to the Speech from the Throne was moved by Mr. Wharton, Member for Ripon, a Chairman of Quarter Sessions and a Railway Director. In his speech there occurred a

noteworthy passage to the effect that the County Magistrates, whose administrative functions were about to be extinguished, would exclaim to the President of the Local Government Board, "*Ave, Cæsar, morituri te salutant!*" The seconder was Colonel Duncan, an Artillery officer, but an orator by nature, and a man of magnetic sympathy. The House seldom cares for rhetoric, but his rhetorical utterances affected even this fastidious assembly. Mr. Gladstone declared this short speech to be one of the best of its kind he had heard for many years.

The debate on the Address lasted just a fortnight, and ended on the 24th of February. Much of the time was occupied by the Nationalist Members, headed by Mr. Parnell. The provisions of the Crimes Act for Ireland, passed in the previous Session, had been firmly carried out in the proclaimed districts. Two Nationalist Members had at the outset of this Session been arrested in the very neighbourhood of the House. One enthusiastic Gladstonian compared the imprisoned Members to the great Bunyan in confinement during the century before last. Mr. William O'Brien, just released from his imprisonment, returned to his

seat, and fulminated against the Unionist Government. His intonation was furious—he shrieked for a moment, then dropped to *basso profondo*, and ended in a stage whisper. As a histrionic performance his gesticulation was well worth seeing. The next day Mr. Gladstone himself, with tempestuous oratory, seemed in effect to justify the Plan of Campaign, to palliate boycotting as being only exclusive dealing, and to laud the National League to the skies. As he sat down, the Nationalist Members rose in their seats, shouting tumultuously, and waving their hats. He looked as if quite touched by this demonstration!

During the discursive debate, which travelled over many subjects and many countries, Mr. Henry Chaplin, as the foremost representative of the agricultural interest, made a speech which was understood by us as a relinquishment of Protection for the present by the Protectionist section of our Party. Some of our Ministers had spoken to the same effect out of doors.

The Address having been voted, the first step in actual business was the amendment of the Rules of the House. It has been mentioned in the last chapter how intimation had been conveyed to our

Leader that some alteration must be made, so as to afford us relaxation from the fatigues of our attendance. Accordingly it was at this time arranged that on Mondays and Thursdays the principal business of the House, or the main subject of debate, should stop at midnight. After that hour unopposed business might be taken till one o'clock, but, as a rule, would be over by half-past twelve. On the other hand, we were to assemble at three o'clock in the afternoon instead of four o'clock as heretofore. On Tuesdays and Fridays we were to sit from two to seven o'clock, adjourn till nine, and sit on till one in the morning; but this latter hour was afterwards, in a subsequent Session, altered to midnight. The working hours on Wednesdays, from noon till six, remained as before. These changes afforded a real boon to us, and changed our parliamentary life greatly for the better. Indeed, the relief from the night-sittings rendered a political existence bearable, which was fast becoming unbearable. As an instance of the promptitude with which the House will act when, after long incubation, its mind is made up, it may be mentioned that these new Rules, which gave us a revised mode for our Par-

liamentary life, were produced, debated, and passed on Friday the 24th of February, and came into effect on the very next sitting of the House, namely, Monday the 27th. We adjourned at a quarter past twelve that night, in real glee at the prospect of being no longer overworked at night.

About the same time the application of closure was facilitated by reducing the number of Members required for that process from two hundred to one hundred. We had expected resistance from the Nationalists, but they yielded the point, with the caustic remark that we were only weaving a rope for our own necks, which would be drawn tight when one day they should be in power and we in opposition!

About this time also the possibility of any legislation, on a considerable scale, being ever again effected by Private Members was much discussed. We, who were elected in 1885, had come to regard the time of the House as being mainly at the disposal of the Government. But in former times not more than two full days in the week belonged to the Government of the day; the other three days were largely available for Private Members, who often played a historic part as legis-

lators, initiating and passing projects of law. Such a part was no longer open to them, inasmuch as their three days in the week were frequently being taken up by the Government. The exigency, caused by the stress of business for the Session, was usually but too manifest. Still, piteous pleas would be urged by Private Members whenever the Leader of the House proposed to sacrifice their pet projects, their Bills, or their Resolutions. There was, indeed, a comic element in the situation, and the complaints of the victims were generally received with laughter by the House. Thoughtful or philosophic Members would opine that some process of selection should be devised, whereby those measures which did command general support should be brought to the front, and those which did not should be relegated to the background. None was devised, however; except a rule giving some priority after Whitsuntide to Bills which had by that date been read a second time. So the only chance lay in this, that a number of Members might combine to ballot for this and that Bill or Resolution; in which case a good day would be found for the particular measure, provided that the Government did not afterwards appropriate that date.

The next step in the Session was the introduction by Mr. Goschen of his scheme for the Conversion of the National Debt, in Committee of the whole House at the two - o'clock sitting of Friday, the 9th of March. This he did in one of the most masterly speeches ever made by a Chancellor of the Exchequer. He easily showed the height at which British credit was standing, and the growing demand for Consols as constituting an uniquely good security. His object was to reduce the rate of interest from 3 to $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. hereafter. But intermediately for a term of years the reduction was to rest at $2\frac{3}{4}$ per cent., partly out of consideration to annuitants who, under trusts and settlements, could not sell out and had to subsist on the interest. He presented a retrospect of former Conversions at various epochs in our history as precedents, though none of them equalled the present proposals in magnitude. Then Mr. Gladstone made a brief but sympathetic speech, which was received with cheers from our Benches. Mr. Goschen pointedly returned his thanks for this speech. By six o'clock that evening the several Resolutions for effecting this, the biggest Conversion in the financial history of our nation, were put from the Chair and

passed, affording a signal instance of business-like promptitude. The Bill giving effect to these Resolutions was brought forward at the two-o'clock sitting on Friday, the 16th, and read a second time that afternoon.

The third stepping-stone, or landmark, in the Session, was the production of the scheme for Local Government in England and Wales, on Monday the 19th of March. This was done by Mr. Ritchie, as President of the Local Government Board. He performed his arduous task admirably well, in a speech of massive simplicity, with no pretension to rhetoric, but sustained without flagging for nearly three hours. This was indeed a Parliamentary effort, marking an epoch in any man's life; and it placed him, *per saltum*, in the first rank of administrators. Seldom has any Member risen so high in a single night as he did by the making of this statement. He touched on the County Councils that were to be created in the interior of the country, their constitution, their modes of election, their areas of operation, their finances. He specially adverted to the great County Council for London, to which all the work heretofore done by the Metropolitan Board of Works was

to be entrusted. He alluded to the possible establishment of District Councils for lesser areas within the jurisdiction of the County Councils, for which measure there might, or might not, be time that Session.

So far no objection seemed to be felt regarding the proposals in any quarter of the House. But then there came one proposition of which we were destined to hear much in the future. To these Councils was to be entrusted the licensing of the liquor traffic, with the proviso that if any public-houses should be closed for public policy without any fault of their own, compensation would be allowed.

The short debate, that ensued on this great exposition, went happily like a marriage-bell. Mr. Gladstone in particular said that it did high honour to its author. The Bill was read for the first time just before the dinner-hour that evening.

Apparently our opponents had been hoping that this scheme, bold in conception and masterly in grasp, would cause some dissension in our Party. At the outset no doubt it was regarded by the Liberal Unionists, with Lord Hartington at their head, as a frankly democratic measure. On the

other hand, the Conservatives from the counties could hardly like it in their hearts, as they knew that many of the rural communities saw no reason for a change, and that popular administration will rarely be economical, but might rather tend to the augmentation of local expenditure and burdens. Still they acquiesced in it for the moment, and refrained from making any complaints that might derogate from the credit that must attach to the production of the largest measure of this kind ever submitted to Parliament.

On the Monday in Passion Week, the 26th of March, Mr. Goschen produced the Budget for the year, with his wonted skill in elaboration. His surplus was utilized by the provision of large grants to the new County Councils and the remission of another penny in the Income Tax, in addition to the penny remitted in the previous year, greatly to the comfort of the struggling clerk, the man in the black coat, as he was called by us in contradistinction to the skilled workman, who was probably better off.

At the two-o'clock sitting of the next day, Mr. W. H. Smith moved the adjournment for the Easter Recess. This motion always serves as a

peg on which may be hung a speech by anyone on any subject under the sun. By long established custom it ought to be moved at such an hour as will allow time for some desultory debate. Some Nationalist attacks were made on Mr. Balfour in the hard old way, and repelled by him in the good old way. By six o'clock that evening we adjourned, rejoicing at the substantial beginning which had been made in our work.

We re-assembled after the Easter Recess on Thursday, the 5th of April. The first business was that of Supply for the Civil Service ; the Votes being taken in detail. Then the Budget Resolutions were passed successfully. Yet we feared there might be trouble ahead, and we apprehended that the two new imposts, the horse tax and the wheel-and-van tax, as proposed in the Budget, might not be finally approved.

On the 12th, the Second Reading of the Local Government Bill was brought forward. The debate lasted till the 20th. It was conducted on a high level by a succession of speakers practically acquainted with the vast subject. Indeed there has rarely been a subject with which so many Members were thoroughly cognisant. I have

never heard a long protracted debate in which the speakers were so uniformly competent as this. The discussion was opened with an ornate speech by Mr. Stansfeld, an accomplished and finished speaker, and one of the most experienced among the Liberal politicians on the subject of local administration. Mr. Leonard Courtney criticized the electoral portions of the scheme, and urged with impassioned earnestness a principle of which he had long been an enlightened advocate, namely, that of "proportional representation" or "the representation of minorities." As an oratorical effort this was the best of the many good speeches made in this debate. Mr. Chamberlain deprecated the plan as unsuited for what he called "the rough and tumble of our political and municipal life." Of the Members on our side, several urged various objections. One Conservative, Mr. Ambrose, a Queen's Counsel, objected more largely. The danger was that a franchise would be set up in the rural districts for the election of County Councillors, whereby the voters who did pay the rates would be swamped numerically by those who did not. Mr. Jesse Collings offered an out-and-out defence of the Bill, in the course of which he

reproached the Gladstonians with promising much and performing little when they had the power, while he praised our Party for undertaking very much though they had promised nothing. We were amused by watching the countenances of the Gladstonians while this speech was being delivered. Two leaders of the Temperance cause, Sir Wilfrid Lawson and Mr. Caine, objected strongly to the provisions for compensation in the licensing clauses, as creating a property in licences, a vested interest in, and almost an endowment of public-houses, which advantage had not heretofore existed. It is remarkable that this view was immediately supported by Sir William Harcourt. The Bill was read a second time, without a division, amidst much cheering.

Nevertheless, the debate had inspired us with misgivings as to the future. Although the rural Conservatives had either consented guardedly, or had given some vent to a half-suppressed displeasure, still only one man had attacked the Bill all round. On the other hand, the urban Conservatives, the Liberal Unionists, and the Gladstonians, had greeted the measure with a chorus of approval. But while everybody had approved in the main, nobody had approved altogether in

detail. Nearly all wished something to be altered, or omitted, or added. We saw that if these many discordant opinions were to be formulated by amendments in the Committee stage, the summer would overtake us with our work unfinished. We already perceived, too, that there would be fierce controversies regarding the provisions for compensation in the licensing clauses.

Next, the Bill for giving effect to the Budget was brought forward for Second Reading. Thereon, Mr. Gladstone, in his most energetic mood, produced a motion to equalize the Death Duties on real and personal property. He had caused an urgent Whip to be issued to his followers for this occasion. His motion was skilfully framed so as to attract, if possible, some of the Liberal Unionists, inasmuch as this particular equalization had been at one time among the watchwords of the Radical Party. Hence we felt anxiety regarding the coming division, when he began his speech with much of the financial aptitude of his palmy days, and with arguments likely to tell upon some sections of the Liberal Unionists. This anxiety was, however, presently dispelled when he rounded upon the whole Party of the Liberal Unionists with sharp taunts, reproaching

them with keeping a Conservative Government in power. We listened, with amazement at the impolicy of this utterance, but with delight also, because hereby they would be fixed in their alliance with us. As might be expected, Lord Hartington made a spirited reply. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach and Mr. Goschen fired shot for shot against Mr. Gladstone's statistical battery. We had our normal majority of a hundred in the division, and thus an assault, which for a moment promised success, ended in utter failure.

Shortly afterwards, Mr. Gladstone attacked the Wine Duties proposed in the Budget. An affront would be offered to French finance, the French Protectionists would be encouraged to enact hostile tariffs against England, a policy of French retaliation would set in, our commercial relations with France would be imperilled, and so forth. Such would be the consequence if a trifling increase should be made in the duty on some sparkling wines. This was an instance of a statesman's vision being blinded by political passion, till he lost, for the moment, the perception of proportion and the appreciation of mental perspective. Finding the sense of the House against him, he exclaimed that

he might as well address a hall filled with marble statues (apparently alluding to our St. Stephen's Hall), as plead with the majority in its present mood.

The production of a Private Member's Bill, for Local Government in Ireland, caused Mr. Balfour to reply that such a project ought not to be taken up by a Private Member, and could not at present be undertaken by the Government. Lord Randolph Churchill held, perhaps erroneously, that this reply amounted to a declaration of "*non possumus*." So he addressed to us a most animated remonstrance. He reminded us of the promise which he as Leader of our Party in the Commons had made in the Autumn of 1886, to the effect that Ireland should have a measure of this kind together with Great Britain. But he was expecting impossibilities if the Government were to undertake such a measure at this time. Manifestly they would be barely able to pass the measure for England alone during this Session, and the next Session would be occupied by a corresponding measure for Scotland.

It was not till the 3rd of May that the consideration of the Local Government scheme was resumed; when a preliminary part of the measure

was dealt with. That part related to the elections which would have to be held during the winter for electing County Councillors according to this Bill. This effected, there yet remained a fortnight before Whitsuntide. The interval thus afforded was taken up by advancing several measures of interest—namely, the Imperial Defence, including the Australian Navy, the coaling stations and the military sea-ports; the Railway and Canal Rates Bill, and the Employers' Liability Bill. The Second Reading of the last-named Bill was obtained through the co-operation of some Radical Members just before the adjournment for Whitsuntide on the 18th.

When we re-assembled on the 31st of May after the Whitsuntide recess, there was as yet no anxiety regarding the course of the Session. The whole month of June was before us for the Committee stage of the Local Government Bill, of which the principle had been acknowledged by the Opposition; and that time ought to suffice. After that, there remained the whole of July for the rest of our work, both legislative and financial. Alas! unconscious of our doom, we were playing with circumstances. Before entering on these circumstances,

however, I must advert to a solemn and pathetic episode.

Within the past few days, alarming accounts had been received from Berlin regarding the mortal illness of the German Emperor Frederick. His death was announced to the House by Mr. W. H. Smith on the 15th of June with suitable expressions of condolence, echoed by Sir William Harcourt from the Opposition side, in the absence of Mr. Gladstone, amidst dead silence. All the Members sat with their heads uncovered, as a mark of respect. On the 18th Mr. W. H. Smith proposed an address of condolence to the Queen, and to the widow, the Empress of Germany and Princess Royal of England. As he rose, all the Members took their hats off in respectful silence. The Motion was seconded by Mr. Gladstone in one of the most beautiful speeches I ever heard. His voice still had all its pathetic solemnity; his manner and matter, diction and delivery, were all perfect for the occasion. Lord Hartington said a few words to complete the unanimity of all Parties in the House. The address to the Imperial widow was to be sent by the Speaker to the British Ambassador at Berlin, who would wait on Her

Majesty and present it. On the 25th of June her gracious and thankful reply was read out by the Speaker, amidst hushed stillness, while all the Members remained bareheaded.

On the re-assembling after Whitsuntide, some few days were taken up by Supply business. It was not till Thursday, the 7th of June, that the big ship of the Local Government was launched on the ocean of controversy in Committee. Immediately there were signs of obstruction, for the Opposition leaders proposed an Instruction to the Committee to include the subject of Vestries and Parish Councils; all which would greatly overweight a measure already too heavy. The proposal could not have been seriously made, save for the purpose of destroying the Bill, and was the first note of warning to us that the Opposition meant, if possible, to defeat the measure, and with it the Government. A day was spent in rejecting this proposal, and then the Chairman of Committees took the Chair. For some days the progress, though steady, was slow, at an average, perhaps of twenty lines a day—not much with a vast Bill of many folio pages. By the end of the month only nine clauses had been passed, a

small proportion of the whole Bill. Thus the political situation, which was bright up to the beginning of the month, had by the end of the same month become utterly overcast, and the Government, hitherto victorious, was threatened with disaster. Evidently the Opposition, though originally favourable to the measure, had conceived the idea of rendering its passing impossible for this Session. If a Government, with nominally a large majority, should have to drop a Bill of first-rate importance, that would be tantamount to defeat. A Government, that had been forced to act thus, would not long survive politically. Some bye-elections, having proved favourable to the Gladstonian cause, doubtless encouraged the Opposition in their design to frustrate the Bill. Such a design seemed by no means impossible of fulfilment at the end of June and the beginning of July. The Gladstonians, on the one hand, desired to render the measure more conducive to the ends of the rural democracy, more subversive of the landed interest, more radical altogether than it actually was. They had been diligently proposing amendments with this view, which we had been rejecting night after night with equal assiduity. On the other hand,

some of the Conservatives, deeming the measure to have already gone too far in those very directions, were lukewarm in its support. The Liberal Unionists were loyal to the measure, and so were many Conservatives. But some individual Conservatives had now and again opposed the Government in details. This had gone so far that Lord Salisbury took the precaution to summon a meeting of the Party at the Foreign Office, in order to represent to them the necessity of holding together if the Bill, and with it the Government, were to be sustained. Throughout these trying weeks Mr. Ritchie displayed consummate skill, tact, patience, and knowledge of detail. He gave us to understand that the Bill would be restricted to County Councils, and that no attempt would be made to extend it to District Councils. This would bring the Bill within manageable compass. He further lightened the ship by the abandonment of the Licensing clauses. Not content with this concession, the Temperance Party insisted on taking up time in discussing a subject which had really been dropped in deference to them.

But the clouds were lifted from our horizon by

the action of the Opposition itself. For Mr. John Morley proposed a Vote of Censure on the Government for its Irish administration. This must have been meant to shake the Unionist Government, but on the contrary its effect was to consolidate the Unionist Party. The Motion was of course defeated by a majority of between ninety and a hundred. All the sections of our Party, which had been hanging loosely together, were, once again, united with close cohesion. So the position was in part saved by the very proceedings that had been intended to weaken it. Thus strengthened, the Government pressed forward the Committee work with the Local Government Bill during the latter days of June and the early days of July.

Yet in respect to the winding up of the Session there was another complication. Early in the Session the two Grand Committees had been constituted on the principle of devolution, one upon Trade, the other upon Law, of which latter I was a member. To each Committee several Bills of interest or consequence had been referred, and each was sending up its reports. Moreover, some Bills were known to be

coming to us from the Lords. We naturally asked ourselves whether all these various Bills were to be passed; and if so, by what date in Autumn should we be released?

On the 10th of July, Mr. W. H. Smith, after much pressure from his followers, made a statement regarding the business of the Session, something like the statement that in former days was called "the massacre of the innocents." He would stand absolutely by the Local Government Bill in its restricted form. He would try to pass some of the Bills reported on by the Grand Committees, otherwise the principle of devolution would be discredited. But as Supply was greatly in arrear, there would have to be an autumn sitting. For the prosecution of the Government business he would move to take up the whole time of the House; and it seemed to us remarkable that he had not done this sooner. This programme was apparently accepted by the House as a whole. The Opposition Leaders appeared now to cease from troubling; indeed, they generously exculpated the Government in respect to the backward state of business. This was kind on their part, for in truth the Ministers

were not wholly free from blame, inasmuch as they might well have taken more energetic steps at the end of May and the beginning of June with the Committee stage of the Local Government Bill.

The need of an autumn sitting was the more readily recognised by us all because by this time a disturbing and retarding cause had arisen, of which the beginning has been already mentioned in the last chapter and must now be recapitulated. The Parliamentary proceedings of last year, 1887, had drawn the public attention more closely than ever to the subject of crimes alleged to be committed in connexion with Nationalist policy in Ireland. The *Times* newspaper had published in London a series of articles entitled "Parnellism and Crime." These were collected and re-published in a pamphlet form. During the spring of that year the *Times* published a letter purporting to come from Mr. Parnell himself, in 1882, after the murder of Lord Frederick Cavendish and Mr. Burke in Dublin. The precise significance of this letter was much discussed afterwards; but at least it gave an *ex post facto* approval or a condonation to the murder of Mr. Burke. Whatever

might be the degree of importance, greater or less, attributable to it if taken singly, it became very important when taken in combination with all the other allegations in "Parnellism and Crime." Following it, there appeared some letters of lesser consequence. The publication, of course, attracted as much notice inside the House of Commons as anywhere. We understood that Mr. Parnell denied the authenticity of the letters, and we expected that he would make some statement to that effect from his place in the House, and announce the commencement of an action for libel against the *Times*. The funds of the National League were ample to sustain him in such a course. He took no such step, however; and this abstinence on his part was deemed objectionable by us, though it did not seem to lower him in the estimation of his Gladstonian friends in the House. But early in the summer of 1888, Mr. O'Donnell brought an action against the *Times* in reference to the whole case. The action at law came to nothing; but during the trial the Attorney-General, Sir Richard Webster, as counsel for the *Times*, made a very important speech, reiterating the substance of "Parnellism and Crime," and

undertaking to prove the authenticity of the letters above mentioned. Sir Richard Webster was here acting as a private barrister, in the professional practice to which he was entitled. But the proceedings at this trial lent to the affair an importance which could no longer be ignored by Mr. Parnell and his allies.

On Friday, the 6th of July, when entering the House, I found the outer lobby in that state of emptiness which is always perceived when something of interest is happening inside the Chamber. Proceeding to my place, I perceived that Mr. Parnell was just rising to offer his personal explanation regarding the speech of Sir Richard Webster in the High Court of Justice. He presented his series of denials, though somewhat guardedly and reservedly, and denounced the letters as forgeries. He looked pale and depressed, but he was sustained occasionally by cheers from his Nationalist followers. Otherwise his reception was chilling; and the crowded House sat silent.

On the following Monday, the 9th of July, Mr. Parnell asked the Government whether they would grant a Parliamentary Committee to investigate the charges brought against him and his by the

Times. This was the very request which he had made the year previously, and which was negatived after a full debate. Mr. W. H. Smith now repeated that the request could not be granted, as such a Committee was utterly unsuited for such an enquiry, which could only be conducted by a judicial tribunal. Mr. Parnell then notified that he would again raise the question on the following Thursday, the 12th. On that day, however, Mr. W. H. Smith came down to the House with a proposal which was offered for Mr. Parnell's acceptance, but for which the Nationalist Leader was evidently unprepared. A Judicial Commission would be appointed, of which the members were to be chosen from among Her Majesty's Judges. This tribunal was to be invested by a special Act of Parliament with plenary powers to investigate and report upon the whole affair. Mr. Parnell seemed to be taken aback, and left the House without making any sign. Notice was immediately given by Government of a Bill for this purpose. On the 19th Mr. Parnell put questions about the Bill to Mr. W. H. Smith, who replied that it was regarded as an offer to be accepted or refused. Mr. Parnell seemed to be extremely dissatisfied, and among other things said,

“are we to await like sheep the verdict of a jury of butchers?”—whatever that might or might not mean. No definite answer came from him, nevertheless, so the Bill was introduced that night. The accusations were stated to be those embodied in “Parnellism and Crime,” and in the recent trial of O'Donnell's action. The Second Reading was moved on the 24th, and the names of the Judges were announced—Sir James Hannen, Mr. Justice Day, and Mr. Justice Smith. The clauses were severe, drastic and comprehensive, so as to secure a probing enquiry without let or hindrance, like deep-sea soundings. Then Mr. Parnell opened the debate with a speech that was a wondrous performance. It should have been witnessed by tragedians who have to study the finest types of bitterness and indignation. Without directly opposing the Bill, he criticised it with the view, apparently, of narrowing, hampering and spoiling the enquiry. The Second Reading was carried after two days of sharp debating. But there was so much opposition in the Committee stage, that on the 3rd of August the process of final closure had to be applied. That process has been explained in the last chapter; and by it a particular date is fixed, for completing speci-

fied parts of a measure or a measure as a whole. So with this Bill, the several clauses passed through Committee within the time proposed. There was troublous delay at the Report stage, but this was overcome on the 9th of August, and by consent of the House, the Bill was read a third time—Mr. Sexton exclaiming, with some dignity, “Pass your Bill, and may God defend the right!”

This measure, when first announced by Mr. W. H. Smith, took most of us by surprise. After reflection it was generally disapproved by the Conservative Members. Had the project been known to them beforehand, they would have remonstrated with the Government. They saw no adequate reason for so critical an enterprise as this. Indeed, neither of the contending parties desired such a procedure. Evidently Mr. Parnell was at first aghast, and did his best for its prevention. Among other considerations, he and his friends must be put thereby to a vast expense. Still less could the *Times* have desired it; on the contrary, a great newspaper, which had done what it thought to be its duty to the nation, was placed virtually in the position of a public prosecutor, probably at an enormous cost to itself.

This invidious and expensive task was imposed by Parliament on the proprietors of a newspaper who formed a private corporation. Mr. Parnell had, in our opinion, no claim to assistance from the State in this matter. If he had been wronged the law of libel would give him a remedy, and his abstinence from that procedure was never satisfactorily understood by us. Politically, we apprehended that the enquiry by the Commission would come to be regarded as a State trial, that its result was most uncertain, and that if it should be favourable to the accused, the Nationalists would be held to have triumphed over us, although we had never been the accusers. We could hardly imagine any issue that would be beneficial from our point of view. On the other hand many issues suggested themselves which might be damaging to our cause.

On the 17th of July the Local Government Bill passed through Committee, which was a very fair result. The delays, in the earlier part of the stage, were more than balanced by the business-like rapidity in the latter part. There was trouble still ahead, however, for a multitude of new or additional clauses had to be presented. These were disposed of in two evenings of really brilliant work, evincing

the matchless capacity of the House for doing business when it had a mind thereto. At length there were resounding cheers when Mr. Courtney, who as Chairman deserved immense credit, uttered the formula, "I report this Bill, as amended, to the House." There yet remained the Report stage; and that was disposed of on the 26th and the 27th. Again the emendations were infinite, but they were settled with commendable promptitude. The amendments were so numerous that the mere putting them to the vote must have severely taxed the Speaker's voice. The last amendment being over by midnight, the Third Reading was moved straightway. Sir William Harcourt, on behalf of the Opposition, made a generous and conciliatory response, paying a tribute to Mr. Ritchie's services. It was a fine sight to see Mr. Ritchie rise to reply, thanking his own Party on the benches behind him, but acknowledging also the forbearance of the Opposition, and the co-operation of the Liberal Unionists. What a happy change in his position had supervened at the end of July as compared with the end of June!

A quorum had been retained in the House of Lords waiting for this Bill, which was read there a

first time that very night at one o'clock, so that no precious hour should be lost.

By Friday, the 3rd of August, it had been decided that as the time of the House had been mainly given to legislation, there must be an autumnal sitting for Supply. So a Vote on Account was proposed of seven and-three-quarter millions to enable the Government to carry on the Civil Services for four months.

We rose on the 13th August, inasmuch as Parliament was adjourned without a prorogation, till the 6th of November; and so ended the first sitting of this Session. The hero of the parliamentary hour was Mr. Ritchie beyond doubt. He had devoted himself officially for a year or more to the entire subject of Local Government, and though many Members equalled him in acquaintance with parts of it, none approached him in knowledge of the whole. But besides knowledge and official ability, he evinced dexterity in reply, alertness of thought, alacrity in suggestion, and command of temper. He had proved himself to be a typical Briton, not showy indeed, but rising to the height of any task allotted to him, however arduous.

As we separated, like a flight of birds to all the four winds, the uppermost feeling in our minds was thankfulness for release. But beneath that movement there lay the sentiment of disappointment at our having sat for more than six laborious months, that is, from the 9th of February to the 13th of August, without fully accomplishing our mission. We were also anxious regarding the effect of the precedent that was being set of an autumn sitting for the ordinary work of a Session. Such sittings had indeed been known before, but always for some extraordinary reason or some special occasion. This sitting, however, was for the ordinary business of the Session, and we were simply to finish in the autumn that which we had failed to do in the summer. Hence many old Parliamentarians began to fear that such sittings would in future form the rule and not the exception.

When we met on the 6th of November, Supply was ostensibly the business for which we were re-assembled, and it covered nearly the whole range of the public service, in which most, though not quite all, of the Votes had to be completed. This much must at all events be accomplished. But the question arose in all our minds as to whether

any legislation was to be undertaken as well. We understood from the Opposition that if the Government would be content with Supply without attempting legislation, then the sitting would terminate easily, but that if legislation were to be attempted, then there would be trouble all round. At first Mr. W. H. Smith made no sign, and simply set up Supply. The Opposition, being in doubt, impeded the Votes at every step, in order to narrow any possible time for legislation—indeed, one of the Nationalists said that they were “clinging to the Votes like grim death.” Hence it was inferred that among the subjects of legislation there must be one item affecting them. This item was the extension of the Ashbourne Act, which was supposed to be in contemplation. Further, many of us thought that the Employers’ Liability Bill should be passed now, as it had been elaborated in the Grand Committee during the summer. It was opposed only by Mr. Broadhurst and a section of the Radicals, to whom we were unwilling to yield. Accordingly, on the 16th of November, that is ten days after our re-assembling, Mr. W. H. Smith announced that both these Bills would be proceeded with. From that moment, to the end of the Session, the Oppo-

sition offered every obstacle in their power. Mr. Gladstone had entered the House, looking like an eagle on the swoop, and denounced the extension of the Ashbourne Act. In his wake followed Mr. Parnell with the Nationalists. It is hard to say why they objected, except that they disliked any boon being accorded to Ireland by our Party. The Act in question, passed in 1885, authorized advances of public money up to five millions sterling to Irish tenants, for enabling them to purchase their holdings and become owners of the land they cultivated. This limit being nearly reached, the Government desired to continue the making of advances up to the sum of five millions more; that was all. This plain proposal led to many acrimonious and captious debates. The Bill, however, having been introduced on Monday the 19th, was read a third time on the 29th, and this obstacle being removed, we hoped to finish Supply in peace. Nevertheless, the impediments were continued, probably to prevent the Employers' Liability Bill being passed, and to exclude finally the wheel-and-van tax and one or two lesser measures. So virulent was the opposition that we began to fear lest our sitting should be prolonged

over Christmas. The situation was embarrassed by Mr. Gladstone coming down from Hawarden to attack Mr. Balfour. Also Lord Randolph Churchill assailed the policy by which certain military operations had been undertaken at Suakim against the Arabs. Once more the Government had to lighten their bark by abandoning the Bills already mentioned. Even then it was with the greatest difficulty that Supply was finished and the Appropriation Bill passed, so as to release us late on the afternoon of Christmas Eve.

We were not wholly satisfied on a retrospect of the Session of 1888, which with its two sittings had lasted eight and a-half months out of the twelve. Two measures of the very first rank had indeed been carried, the one financial, namely, the Conversion of the National Debt; the other administrative, namely, the Local Government for England. One Bill of high interest had been elaborated, but in the end was left uncarried, namely, that relating to Employers' Liability. This Session of 1888, though fraught with difficulty, was less difficult than the Session of 1887, and yet had been conducted with less success. It is one of the primary duties of a Leader to keep his followers in good heart,

fresh spirits, confident zeal, unbroken energy. These valuable qualities are to the Leader what capital and income are to the financier. Heavy drafts have to be drawn upon them in arduous Sessions; still the drawer should render his reasons satisfactory to the drawees—and this had been done in 1887. But the drafts had been even heavier in 1888, for reasons less satisfactory. At all events we cherished the most friendly regard for Mr. W. H. Smith, and rejoiced to learn that just before the prorogation he, accompanied by Mr. Ritchie, had gone for much-needed recreation to the shores of the Mediterranean.

CHAPTER VII.

SESSION OF 1889.

Meeting of Parliament, February 21st—Address to the Crown passed, March 6th—Striking references to the Parnell Commission—Naval Defence scheme produced, March 7th—Tribute to the memory of John Bright—Scheme for Local Government in Scotland introduced, April 8th—Budget day, April 15th—Naval Defence Bill passed Third Reading, April 20th—Bill regarding Scotch Universities read second time, June 20th—Grants for children of the Prince of Wales, July 2nd to August 5th—Scotch Local Government Bill read third time, July 30th—Conduct of the Nationalist Members—Vain attempt to pass Tithes Bill—Technical Instruction Bill passed, August 28th—Prorogation on 31st.

ON Thursday, the 21st of February, 1889, the fifth Session of my experience was opened. The Speech from the Throne indicated that the two principal subjects for the year would be legislation for Scotland, and augmented Naval Defence for the Empire. But for this Session, as for the preceding Sessions, the programme was loaded, as we thought over-burdened, with a list of secondary measures. Otherwise, we were well pleased to find that this was to be a Scotch Session in the main. The taunts and reproaches

of some Scotch Radical Members, regarding the neglect of Scotch business by the Imperial Parliament, had been annoying to us English, when heard simultaneously with the hostile declamation of the Irish Members, and the murmuring even of the Welsh. We noted, however, how England, as the senior, the leading partner in the national firm, had been generous to her lesser partners, and had sacrificed to their claims her own claim to Parliamentary time and attention. We would try to afford some satisfaction to the Scotch, whose unity with ourselves we heartily cherished. Equally anxious was our Party to do whatever could be done by legislation—and that happily proved to be very much—for maintaining the superiority of the British Navy over the Navies of the European Continent. We trusted that our Ministers would manage to keep this Session within due bounds. There was, of course, the cloud of the Parnell Commission (already described in the preceding Chapter) looming on our horizon, ragged in outline, dark in hue, like the thundercloud. Thence some downpours would surely descend in torrents on our Parliamentary crops; nevertheless

the harvest of success would be reaped. This time last year, 1888, we had expected a comparatively pleasant Session, and had been disappointed. Once more now in 1889 we expected the same, past dis-illusions notwithstanding. For undoubtedly the situation was favourable for us on the whole, and the position strong. The Irish difficulty had been beaten down by moral as well as legal force. Ireland had at length been really governed, with the co-operation of the loyal, and to the discomfiture of the evil-disposed. One great financial measure for the United Kingdom, and one great administrative measure for England—both among the largest affairs of their respective kinds in the national history — were in working order. The alliance between us and the Liberal Unionists had been strongly and loyally maintained.

The Address in answer to the Royal Speech lasted till Wednesday the 6th of March, that is just a fortnight from its beginning.

The distinguishing feature in this debate was Mr. John Morley's formal arraignment, on the 25th of February, of Mr. Balfour's Irish Administration. I well recollect meeting Mr. Morley that afternoon as he passed up from the cloak-room to the House.

He looked as if mentally primed for the occasion, and big with fateful thought! After a comparatively trivial exordium he warmed with the nervous excitement of speaking, and used all the phraseology of which he was an almost unequalled master. Alluding scornfully to the schemes of material improvement for Ireland, as vainly offered for the mitigation of political discontent, he said :—"The Irish Secretary comes floating by with healing on his wings and a plan for arterial drainage! Does he expect to minister to a mind diseased by presenting a scheme of light railways?" Towards the close of his speech Mr. Morley alluded incisively to the Parnell Commission, before which tribunal the pending enquiry was then tending to cast discredit on the incriminating letters. By implication, if not in express words, he accused the Government of having participated in a conspiracy against Mr. Parnell, of which they had been the dupes and the accomplices. He was not called to order; nor did any cry of "Order!" arise. Yet these sentences deliberately uttered, and doubtless prepared beforehand, were really far worse than the hard and violent words which sometimes escape men in the heat of passionate controversy.

The next day Colonel Saunderson made another of those grand speeches the delivery of which formed one of the most impressive spectacles that the House could afford. The doctrine in regard to his native Ulster was politically like strong meat. Towards the peroration he vindicated the right of that distinguished province to rebel against Home Rule. Nowhere, he affirmed, had the British Crown and the Imperial Parliament more loyal and law-abiding citizens than the Ulster men. But they owed that allegiance to the Crown presiding over that Parliament and no other, to the Assembly sitting in Westminster and nowhere else. They did not owe, and would not pay, allegiance to a Home Rule Parliament in Dublin, which would disfranchise them from their birthright as British citizens. All this was uttered with the utmost solemnity of voice, manner, gesture, and with all the forcefulness of a commanding figure.

Shortly afterwards, Mr. T. Wallace Russell, evidently an orator by nature, made one of those scathing orations against the Parnellites, the National League, the Plan of Campaign—which confirmed his position in the very first rank of

debaters, on his own subjects at least. No debater pointed the most emphatic accusations with so much local knowledge, with allegations in such detail, as he. The Nationalist Members listened uneasily, and burst into snappish exclamations of impatience. But we never received anything like the categorical answer that such an indictment needed.

Mr. Gladstone concluded this part of the debate with some oratorical fireworks, let off in his smartest and most brilliant manner, to the rapturous delight of his Nationalist allies. He addressed himself, not to the condition of Ireland, but to the prospects of this Parliament. We had understood, from his utterances outside, that he had been hoping to break up our strength. By this speech, however, he seemed to acknowledge that, despite the changes wrought in his favour by bye-elections, we still possessed substantial strength that might endure for some time yet. Once more he rounded on the Liberal Unionists, predicting that, whatever they might be in this Parliament, they would in the next Parliament be reduced to insignificance. For us Conservatives, he said that our doom was as "the writing on the wall"

—that he and his, now militant, would soon be triumphant.

During this debate the case of the incriminating letters as against Mr. Parnell collapsed before the Judicial Commission, on the absconding of a witness named Pigott. On this being known to the House, some Nationalist Members seemed to be stamping the memory of this man on the debates by cries of "Pigott! Pigott!" But the Speaker intervened to stop this innovation. Mr. Parnell, doubtless by pre-arrangement, walked to his seat on the evening of March the 3rd, when the Opposition benches were crowded. Instantly the whole Party of Gladstonians and Nationalists, including their front-bench men, rose to receive him, and remained standing for two or three minutes, with cheers and salutations. Mr. Gladstone himself headed the demonstration, the strangest I ever witnessed in this Chamber. How little did they who offered this ovation, think that in the following year the most cruel of reverses would overtake Mr. Parnell in his mid-career, and sever him from many of the partisans in this House who now cried "*Io triumphe*,"—and that afterwards the fair fellowship between him and them would be severed for ever!

Candid friends from the outside used to warn us that this affair would break up the Unionist cause, or drag it down. But despite these episodes, our men, though confirmed in their worst forebodings as to the wisdom of constituting the Parnell Commission, yet stood manfully by the Government. So our majorities in the divisions arising out of the debate on the Address were as good as ever.

It may be well to anticipate the narrative of events for a few days by mentioning the sequel of the affair. On Friday, the 23rd of March, Sir William Harcourt made a premeditated attack on the Attorney-General, Sir Richard Webster, respecting the conduct of the accusers before the Parnell Commission. He professed, doubtless with sincerity, friendship and respect for Sir Richard Webster personally ; but for party warfare it was desirable to scarify the Attorney-General, and therefore the thing was done. He urged, with logical force but with unsparing censure, all the objections that lay against the situation of the Law Officer of the Crown engaged in a great cause, which, though not a criminal prosecution, had come to be regarded as a branch of the case of a political

Party. As Sir Richard Webster rose to reply, with the highest *verve* and spirit, he was vehemently cheered by our men, though most of them regretted that the situation had been brought about. We felt, indeed, that he had acted with professional rectitude, and that he was entirely within his right. But we were sorry that the Government had allowed the Attorney-General to act, inasmuch as other Counsel were of course available, and we feared lest our Party should be to some extent compromised thereby. Still, Sir Richard Webster was popular and respected among us ; he had been severely attacked, and we afforded him the utmost encouragement in repelling his accuser.

The active work of the Session being now in hand, it may be proper to notice the conduct of the Irish Nationalist Members. In 1886 and 1887 there were blazing questions in respect to Ireland which affected the whole Session, and on which the attention of these Members was naturally centred. In 1888, towards the close of the Session, again their mind was stirred to its very depth by the project of the Parnell Commission. But in this Session of 1889 their thoughts must have been much less

pre-occupied by Irish affairs. Nevertheless they continued to trouble the British Unionists, evidently on some settled design of troubling, which seemed to be in this wise. We were to feel the impossibility of conducting the affairs of the House while some eighty discontented Nationalists sat below the gangway. We were to be annoyed to that degree of intensity which might induce us to rid ourselves of them and their grievances at any price. We were to be vexed by the daily sight of our Parliamentary traditions, privileges and regulations being reduced to impotence. We were to be worn out by the toil of dragging our political machine over impediments raised up at every step. We were to be grieved at infractions of the external decorum which had heretofore, with rare exceptions, governed our proceedings. The Nationalists alone could say how far the above suppositions were correct.

After voting the Address to the Crown, the Government at once proceeded with their foremost measure, namely, that of Naval Defence. On the 7th of March Lord George Hamilton, as First Lord of the Admiralty, in a lucid speech produced the scheme of naval shipbuilding by a financial plan

extending over five years. This scheme was to be embodied in an Act of Parliament, as a fixed programme of shipbuilding for a specified term of years, to which Parliament was to bind itself beforehand. In respect to naval construction, and to augmenting satisfactorily the strength of the Navy, the advantages of the scheme were inestimable, inasmuch as the work of constructing would be allotted with certainty to the several yards for shipbuilding, both public and private. The sum proposed for the term amounted to twenty-one millions sterling, of which about half would be provided by Votes in Supply from year to year in the usual manner, and the remainder would be raised by a special arrangement to be sanctioned by the Act. We all hailed this project with joyful satisfaction. The only doubtful note on our side was struck by Lord Randolph Churchill. On subsequent days, when the preliminary Resolution regarding the finance of this scheme came to be passed, Members of the Opposition began to object; first Sir Edward Reed, much to our surprise, as he had been a great naval constructor; then Mr. Childers on technical grounds, which in ordinary cases would be valid; and lastly Mr. Gladstone himself. The Government replied that it would be

financial pedantry to apply to the building of a certain number of battleships, for a specified purpose, those ordinary methods which govern our finance, and which are technical rules rather than obligatory principles.

About this time an Address was presented by all of us non-official Members of the Conservative Party to Mr. W. H. Smith, congratulating him on his return in fair health from the Mediterranean, and entreating him to retain his post as long as he could. He replied that he would certainly stay so long as his health might permit him to do so.

On Friday the 29th of March the House was crowded, even in every nook and corner, to hear the last honours rendered to the memory of John Bright. The first speech was made in brief and generous terms by Mr. W. H. Smith. Then rose Mr. Gladstone to make one of those orations in which he excelled all men living. He offered a testimony, remarkable as coming from him, to the effect that Bright's eloquence was the most powerful that had resounded within the walls of Parliament in this generation. He concluded by declaring Bright's memory to be a venerated heritage of the English-speaking race as it spread over the world. Mr.

Justin M'Carthy followed with one of those graceful and poetic speeches in which he is unsurpassed, and said that Ireland would place her *immortelles* on the grave of this great Englishman. Lord Hartington added that Bright was the greatest Parliamentary figure of our day. Mr. Chamberlain completed the unanimous eulogy, being the head of the Birmingham Party that had returned Bright as its representative for a whole generation. During the delivery of these speeches there was absolute silence in the crowded House, and we all sat with our heads uncovered. We, who were returned for the first time in 1885, had heard Bright only once in the House, and then his speech seemed but a reflection from the light of other days. But we had read the report of some speeches he had made, carrying the utmost weight with the electors during the crisis of the Election in 1886, and we knew that he had written letters of great influence with Liberal Members. We remembered his appearance in our lobby that night in June of 1886 when the Home Rule Bill was defeated. Thus he had been regarded by us as one of the chief pillars of the Unionist Cause, and, in forgetfulness of all former differences, his memory was cherished with the most generous appreciation.

In these days a peculiar phenomenon supervened, namely, the formation of a Radical section from out of the Gladstonian Party. The particulars of its organization, its objects, its numbers, were never known to us, nor did we seek to know them. But its existence was a patent fact, regarding which there was neither disguise nor mystery. Its chairman was, we learned, Mr. Dillwyn, a man of culture but a sturdy Radical of the elder type; its fighting chief was Mr. Labouchere, and its manager or Whip was Mr. Jacoby. Its numbers were not exactly made out by us, but they ranged from fifty to seventy Members. Their object was the advancement of Radicalism by the promotion of ultra-progressive measures. Such a section was indeed a lance sticking in the side of Mr. Gladstone and the Gladstonians. It further became a factor in the politics of the moment.

By this time we had fully tried the effect of the revised Rules, passed in the previous Session, on our Parliamentary habits and mode of life. We had derived sensible relief from the cessation of the debate on the main question before the House as the hand of the clock over our door pointed to midnight. This tended somewhat to shorten debate,

yet the arrangement did not seem to protract the settlement of affairs in the House. Unopposed business might be taken up till one o'clock in the morning. In the absence of opposition it would occupy only a few moments, as the House always despatches such business with lightning rapidity. But if on being brought forward it were opposed, or technically blocked, then there must be postponement. The outcome was that, as a rule, we were released at half-past twelve; although occasions sometimes arose when we were detained longer. We were occasionally victimized for an all-night sitting, when on any emergency the midnight limitation was suspended. The change in the Rules, by substituting rest for un-rest at night, undoubtedly improved our health, softened our temper, sobered our judgment, and gave us alacrity for labour. It rendered Parliamentary life tolerable for those who had to attend regularly. I may adduce my own case as an illustration of what would happen to others. Though residing on Hampstead Heath, I had been obliged in 1886 and 1887 to lodge in St. James' Place during the week. But in 1888 I was usually able to drive home to Hampstead, and yet to go to bed by half-past one in the morning. My companion

used to be Mr. Ambrose (Member for Harrow), who also lived on the Heath. During our nightly drive of five miles, rising about 400 feet above the level of the Thames, we discussed the events of the debates just over. At the end of winter and the beginning of spring, the weather would often at this hour be very trying, especially if snow with ice lay on the ground as we breasted the hill. One night a blizzard caught us, so we were unable to penetrate beyond Euston, and had to halt there for the night.

On the 8th of April there occurred the chief event of the Session, namely, the introduction of the Bills (four in number) for Local Government in Scotland by Lord-Advocate Robertson, following exactly the main lines of the Act passed last Session for England. He performed the task with all his charm and lucidity of style, fully sustaining the enviable repute already acquired. He brought all the traditional nomenclature, and the technicalities of Scottish procedure, into harmony with the principles already established. When he concluded, Mr. Campbell - Bannerman, as the foremost Scotch Member, sounded the first note of approbation. Thereon the other Scotch Members, usually but too

hard to satisfy, followed with quite a chorus of praise and congratulation.

On the 11th of April Baron de Worms (our Under Secretary of State for the Colonies) introduced the Bill to enable the Government to take steps, in pursuance of the provisional Convention between England and other Powers, for obviating the consequences of the sugar bounties, which have for many years past been established on the Continent of Europe. Being an accomplished linguist, and better acquainted with the European Courts than any other Member, he had been deputed by the British Government for these negotiations. He now proposed his measure in a very well-informed speech excellently delivered. Many of his admirers, however, feared that some interests in England would be arrayed against the plan.

On the 15th of April, that is on Monday in Passion week, Mr. Goschen introduced his third Budget, and sustained with unflagging spirit and vivacity an exposition lasting for two hours and a half. After several passages which lighted up with brilliancy the dulness of finance, he concluded with a noble peroration summarizing the results of his three Budgets. Despite the relief afforded by the reduction

of the interest on the National Debt, consequent on the Conversion of the previous year, he had a deficiency to make up, because of the surrender of the License duties and of part of the Probate duty to the County Councils according to the agreement of the previous year, and because of the special fund to be raised for the National Defence Scheme already described. We remembered that the two new imposts proposed in the previous year had failed to pass. So we were relieved on hearing that there was to be no increase to the Income Tax, already too high in time of peace. But the deficiency was to be supplied by a slight increase in the Death duties and in the Beer duties. This seemed likely to succeed, though there might be some murmuring.

This year Easter fell late, and it was not till Wednesday, April the 16th, that we adjourned for a Recess of a fortnight. The progress of the Session had been moderate only. The Ministers had been trying to make progress with Supply on earlier dates than had been usual in the previous Sessions, having been reproached with tardiness in this respect. Further, they had been tender to the legislative privileges of Private Members. It was thought that this much of consideration might be accorded, as

the Party was strong and its programme was not excessive.

After our return, on April the 29th, from the Easter Recess, the first event of consequence was the successful, almost triumphant, carrying of the Naval Defence Bill. It was brought up for Second Reading on Monday, May the 6th. Then it was opposed by Mr. Labouchere and Sir Wilfrid Lawson with speeches, which being mainly humorous, or even facetious, were not taken seriously in any quarter of the House. On the following day it was read a second time by a majority of two to one, the largest majority we ever had in this Parliament. Indeed the Opposition numbered only 138 Members, including Mr. Gladstone and some of his principal henchmen. We hailed this as a good omen for all patriotic interests. On the 14th, the Bill passed through the Committee stage in three hours. On the Third Reading there was some debate because Lord George Hamilton had been attacking Sir William Harcourt in an extra-parliamentary speech which was answered in Parliament. The Bill passed the House on the 20th, being the first important Act of the Session.

In these days there were some important meetings

in a Committee-room upstairs of what was known among ourselves as the Agricultural Committee. This was a private Committee, consisting of Conservative Members representing agricultural constituencies, of whom, of course, I was one. Our Chairman was Mr. Henry Chaplin of Lincolnshire, the fittest person possible. We used to deliberate as to what measures before Parliament were likely to affect the agricultural interest, what parts should be supported and what opposed, or what amendments should be suggested. I was sorry to note that dissatisfaction seemed to exist regarding several provisions in the Budget, as being adverse to the landed interest. Frank communications were made to Mr. Goschen and were cordially and courteously answered.

Notwithstanding all this, the brewing industry was so dissatisfied with the increase of the Beer duties that there arose a trouble which might have led to a crisis within the Cabinet. This feeling seemed to be most acute in the Eastern counties. Sir Edward Birkbeck, a typical man both as a Conservative and an East Anglian representative, had given notice of an amendment, in the Committee stage of the Budget Bill, to limit this increase to one year. We soon learned that the Ministry could hardly

consent to this, as it would embarrass the position of our Chancellor of the Exchequer. He had proposed two lesser imposts last year and had been obliged to relinquish them. He had now made this further proposition in order to avoid raising the Income Tax, and he could not be expected to continue the method of relinquishment. So we feared that he would resign if Sir Edward Birkbeck's amendment were accepted by the Party. On Thursday, the 16th of May, that peculiar expectancy was perceptible which indicates a crisis in the thoughts of men. Five-line Whips had been issued on both sides, as storm-signals. A part of the Opposition, however, declared for the Government, though Mr. Gladstone himself made no sign. Sir Edward Birkbeck, had he moved, would have carried many with him from our side. However, he had a patriotic regard for the whole situation with its various embarrassments, and announced that he would not proceed with his amendment, so the danger was averted in the nick of time. That evening Mr. Goschen returned thanks for the courtesy shown to him, but as a financier adhered to his own view.

On the 16th of May the Budget Bill was read a third time. By a remarkable coincidence this was

the very date for the Third Reading of the Naval Defence Bill. It seldom happens that two important Bills pass the House on the same day!

The Scotch Local Government Bill was brought up for Second Reading on Thursday, the 23rd of May. The ensuing discussion was one of those which our Scotch colleagues used to call "haggis debates." What exactly they meant by this popular term I never knew, but it seemed to signify a debate turning on technicalities that were understood only by those conversant with the local affairs of Scotland. On Thursday, the 30th, the moribund debate was galvanized into vitality by a brilliant speech from Lord-Advocate Robertson, under whose touch the skeleton of ancient customs was clothed with living interest. To our glad surprise the Bill was read a second time without a division! Soon, however, our joy proved to be premature, for it became apparent that the object of the Opposition had been to pave the way for the discussion of a proposal to refer this Bill to a Committee, not of the whole House, but of Scotch Members. The Government at once declared this to be absolutely inadmissible; and declined to refer their Bill to a Committee which would largely consist of their opponents.

We, English Members, were indeed surprised at this request. There being a solidarity between England and Scotland, the Scotch Members had voted in all the stages of the Local Government Bill for England during the previous year. English Members had by parity a right to do the same for the Scotch Bill during this year. After a debate, the Bill entered on the Committee Stage of the whole House in the usual way. Shortly afterwards, a subsidiary Bill on Scotch Local Government was read a second time.

On Monday, June the 3rd, Mr. W. H. Smith brought up a Bill for the creation of an Agricultural Department, a measure of which the need had long been admitted, but for which the moment had never been found. It was read a second time without a division, and was regarded as a boon to the agricultural interest.

In these days the Royal Commission on the relations between the War Office and the Admiralty was considering its Report. It had been appointed during 1887, in deference to the wishes of many Members experienced in military affairs as well as in Parliament. Lord Hartington was its President, Mr. W. H. Smith, Lord Randolph Churchill, and Mr. Campbell-Bannerman sat on it; with them

were other persons belonging to the Army and Navy, or otherwise connected with national affairs, of whom I was one. It sat from time to time, examined many distinguished witnesses, and collected many written opinions. It sustained with its approval the system of the Admiralty as a whole, but suggested some important changes in the War Office. It recommended a better inter-communication between the chief authorities of the Army and the Navy.

As Whitsuntide approached, some bargaining began between the Ministers and the Opposition as to how much of Supply business was to be done before the adjournment; the instinct of play being equally strong on both sides. If a certain number of Votes in Supply could be obtained, the adjournment would be for ten days; if not, for a week only. Naturally the Opposition soon found reasons for passing the number of Votes in time. When on Tuesday the 4th of June Mr. W. H. Smith announced that we were to have a Recess for twelve days, the burst of cheering, from our men as well as theirs, was one of the countless proofs of the survival of the schoolboy spirit in the House of Commons.

When we re-assembled on June the 17th, after the Whitsuntide Recess, Mr. W. H. Smith made a statement regarding the prospects of the Session. He hoped to bring the Session to a termination earlier this year than in former years. But the two Scotch measures, for the Local Government and for the Universities, must be placed in the van and finished. The Agricultural Department would, he hoped, be constituted. The Bill regarding the Sugar Bounties would not be pressed ; that regarding Tithes would be taken up if time should permit. This modest programme was at once accepted by Mr. Gladstone, who behaved considerately and well. The greyhounds of obstruction were ready to spring from the leash, but he managed to restrain them. The business of Supply was taken up, and the rapid progress gave us quite a cheerful sensation.

The next event was the Second Reading of the Scotch Universities Bill, the second of the two important measures of the Session. This was proposed on the 20th of June by Lord-Advocate Robertson, in a speech excellent like everything that proceeded from him. He showed that these Universities, Edinburgh, Glasgow, St. Andrews, and Aberdeen, had long been recognised as defective

in organisation, despite their historic renown. The debate that night was sustained at an unusually high level, honourable indeed to Scotch oratory. In support of the Bill two fine orations were delivered by Mr. Bryce and Sir Lyon (now Lord) Playfair. Some good words of encouragement were spoken by Mr. Campbell-Bannerman, and the Bill was read that night a second time without a division.

About this time a Bill, brought in by Mr. Mundella on the Front Opposition Bench, for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, was promoted both by the Government and the House. This was one of the few instances of an interesting piece of legislation being piloted through this Parliament by an ex-Minister who for the moment was like a Private Member. His colleague, Mr. Henry Fowler, was also instrumental to this success. Although to us who were connected with Elementary Education it was well known that the mothers in the poorer classes do, as a rule, evince admirable solicitude for their children, yet individual cases of cruelty occur quite numerous enough to demand legislation. Our debates showed that, where no political motives nor party interest supervene, the

Members will apply themselves with single-minded zeal to the work of humanity.

Another Bill brought in by a Private Member was equally fortunate, namely, the Welsh Intermediate Education measure by Mr. Stuart Rendel. This was virtually adopted by Sir William Hart-Dyke, the Education Minister. Though it conceded to Wales several points, not allowed in England, still its passage during this Session was secured.

The success of another Private Member, Mr. Lees Knowles, in procuring the passage of lesser Bills, may here be noted. During this Parliament he was the author of several measures of limited extent, but practically useful character, relating to the food of the people, the public health, the internal regulation of industries. His success in effecting all this, in the odds and ends of Parliamentary time, was a proof of tact and conciliation exercised in dealing with the objections of possible opponents. This exemplifies the possibilities which are still open to Private Members under favouring breezes.

On Tuesday the 2nd of July there began a series of events which lent a bright interest to the now waning Session. Mr. W. H. Smith brought up

from the Bar of the House to the Speaker's Chair a Gracious Message from Her Majesty the Queen, announcing the betrothal of the eldest daughter of the Prince of Wales to the Earl (now Duke) of Fife. We all sat with our heads uncovered while the Royal Message was being read. Mr. W. H. Smith then stated that on the following Thursday he would submit proposals to the House on the subject. Accordingly on the Thursday he proposed the appointment of a Committee to enquire into the mode of making due provision for occasions of this nature. This was seconded by Mr. Gladstone, and carried after some objections from the extreme Radicals. On Tuesday the 9th twenty-five names were submitted of Members to serve on this Committee, reflecting as nearly as possible the whole House. The Committee's Report was considered on Thursday the 25th, and Mr. W. H. Smith, in a judicious speech, moved that a sum of £36,000 a year should be voted as a provision for the children of the Prince of Wales. Mr. Gladstone supported this proposal in one of the noblest speeches I ever heard. From advancing age his voice may have occasionally faltered, but on the whole he spoke brilliantly. Nothing could have

been grander than the flow of his thoughts. There was a breadth of British nationality in his view, an appreciation of what hereditary sovereignty is in a country like this, a sympathy with the Queen and the Prince of Wales, a grasp of the whole historic question, with its financial bearings, that delighted all our Party. His allusions to the Crown, and to the peculiar difficulties that surround it, were elevated and refined—gentlemanlike in the highest sense of the word. This splendid deliverance was concluded amidst the enthusiastic cheers of the great majority among the Members. It was a wondrous sight, never to be forgotten. The debate proceeded well on the whole, though some Members objected to any additional grants being allowed. Many speeches were made with loyal heartiness, and Her Majesty was spoken of most respectfully, even affectionately, by all. The Members as a body sustained their ancient appellation of the faithful Commons. The following day, the 26th, Lord Randolph Churchill followed in the same sense as Mr. Gladstone, and almost equally well. With all the tact and skill of a consummate rhetorician, he made good the argument that after allowing for the Crown lands,

which were temporarily surrendered to the nation, the net cost of Royalty is small in this country, smaller than in any other monarchical country. Mr. Labouchere's adverse amendment was rejected by a majority of more than four to one. The dissentients numbered only 123 out of the whole House.

The discussion was, however, not yet closed, for on Monday the 29th Mr. John Morley moved an amendment on the Resolution, merely because it did not assign finality to the provisions to be made. He, however, acknowledged the importance of the Monarchy as a symbol of national unity, and gave a historical defence of it as an institution in England. During the debate Mr. Chamberlain offered a thoroughgoing vindication of the Resolution, in the course of which he made an attack on Mr. Labouchere and the new Radicals (as contradistinguished from the old) that can only be described as terrific. I have never seen such passion of voice and gesture as that of his peroration, when with scathing words he denounced them as "the Nihilists of politics." This amendment was rejected on a Division, as the former one had been. The Resolution having

been passed, a Bill to give effect to it was introduced and read a third time on the 5th of August. A band of Radicals still objected ; but on a division they mustered less than fifty votes, a very small proportion out of the whole House.

On the 12th of July Mr. W. H. Smith had obtained the whole time of the House for the Government business ; and by the end of that month the two Scotch measures, for the Local Government and the Universities, were nearing completion. With the Local Government scheme the Ministry had followed, for Scotland, the precedent set the year before in England, and had lightened the ship by confining the measure to County Government, postponing Parish Government comprised in the Bill under the name of Parochial Councils.

On the night of Tuesday, the 23rd of July, a conclusive effort was put forth to terminate the Report stage of the Scotch Local Government Bill. After many contests sharp and short, followed by divisions, we got past the hundredth clause of the Bill just before midnight. To our chagrin the hand of the clock pointed to twelve when some clauses yet remained, so, perforce, the case stood adjourned to the next day. On that day, Wednesday, there was

only an afternoon sitting, and the House was empty up to the luncheon hour. Those of us who kept our places saw that the two Front Benches, Ministry and Opposition, had come to some unexpected agreement. Reassembling after the quarter-of-an-hour allowed for lunch, we heard a few words pass to and fro from one side to the other, and the close of the Report stage was put from the Chair amidst cheers from the scanty audience. Straightway the Lord Advocate moved the Third Reading, which was put by the Speaker, who in a few seconds declared that the "Ayes" had it, and the Bill was passed. At length, after interminable delays, the thing was ended in the twinkling of an eye, and the joyous news spread in the lobbies and precincts. It seemed too good to be true, and many men came to the Chamber to see, as if they could hardly believe that all was over.

This left some hours of the afternoon, and the Government proceeded with the Report stage of the Scotch Universities Bill. The scene immediately changed for obstruction, setting in with an obstinacy which, even after all the events of 1887, I had never seen equalled. Certain Scotch Members were anxious to have the name of a particular Professor

added to the Commission which was to regulate affairs under the Bill, and to this the Government for some special reasons could not accede. These Members seemed almost ready to wreck the Bill if they could not carry the nomination of their favourite. This procedure delayed the Report stage, which was, however, passed on the 29th, and the Bill was read a third time the following day.

It was towards the end of a Session, like this of 1890, that the conduct of the Irish Nationalist Members used to be specially vexatious to us. Many of our Members would have left London with their families, in search of health or of recreation absolutely needed. A few of us would remain to fight everything out to the end for our Government and our Party. The Nationalists would be aware of this, and naturally enough, from their point of view, they would play upon our necessities in order to extort concessions to Irish interests. The Votes in Supply for Irish services afforded choice opportunities. Much had happened under Mr. Balfour's Administration in Ireland that in our minds redounded to his honour, and had brought the country under a real Government, whereby the good were encouraged, the industrious protected,

the lawless subjected, the wicked punished. In their minds the very opposite result was attributed to Mr. Balfour, against whom they hinted accusations manifold and multiform with or without any attempt at proof. But to our minds the quietude of the country seemed to be a standing disproof. They would point these accusations with a sharpness of invective which would appear almost incredible to those who had never heard it. Mr. Balfour evidently thought that they were "bad people to run away from," and plied them with vigorous rejoinders; sometimes even carrying the war into their territories. Thereon they would charge him with official discourtesy, and he would reply that they could not expect to enjoy a monopoly of vilification. They were willing to shoot, but not to be shot at in return.

The close of a Session which had run more smoothly than any which I had seen, was impaired in its effect by the attempt to pass at the eleventh hour a contentious measure. It was not till the 8th of August that Mr. W. H. Smith announced that he would proceed with the short Bill for the better recovery of Tithes. This short and simple Bill, which had been read a second time some

weeks previously, was brought up for the Committee stage on the 12th of August. The way was immediately barred by huge obstructions, which were removed on divisions by small majorities only, as many of our men had already left for the holidays. So the Bill appeared on the Committee stage with a long string of hostile amendments on the Notice Papers. We hoped, however, to struggle through this stage despite the narrowness of our majority, when on the 14th we learnt that the Government would make some modifications in deference to the Opposition who were still irreconcilable. On the 16th the Speaker, on being referred to pointedly by Sir William Harcourt, said that these modifications were too large to be introduced into Committee, and that, if they were to be pressed, a new Bill would be necessary. The Government therefore abandoned the measure with an undertaking to reproduce it next Session.

The Government yet resolved gallantly enough to push forward another measure, namely, one for technical instruction. This did indeed seem a forlorn hope in the face of opposition. Nevertheless the Government and its educational friends evinced laudable persistency, even up to the last event of the

Session, namely, the Third Reading of the Appropriation Bill on August the 28th. Mr. W. H. Smith reminded us that this educational measure must pass then or never. So it actually did pass then and there, just in time to be approved by the Lords and receive the Royal Assent. This afforded a signal example of perseverance. Thus the Session was protracted till the end of August, and the hopes of rising at a reasonable date, according to the ideas of the olden time, were defeated.

Among the matters to which attention had been given was the administration of Friendly Societies. Mr. Tomlinson having rendered signal service in Parliament on this behalf received the thanks of some among the greatest of these Societies.

The hero of this Session was Mr. Robertson, Lord-Advocate of Scotland. His nervous eloquence, silvery voice, sparkling wit, lucid exposition, ever charmed his Parliamentary audience. In the two measures, both most important to Scotland, which he had piloted through their various stages, he showed a breadth of statesmanship, a readiness in debate, a mastery of technicalities, a command of temper, a personal geniality which secured for him a universal popularity in the House.

CHAPTER VIII.

SESSION OF 1890.

Meeting of Parliament, February 11th—Debate on the Address concluded, 25th—Adoption of the Report by the Parnell Commission—Introduction of Land Purchase Bill for Ireland, March 24th—Second Reading of Tithes Bill, 27th—Mr. Goschen's great speech on Budget, April 17th—Deadlock caused by production of licensing clauses with provision for compensation—These clauses abandoned in June—Proposal for Autumn Session announced, July 10th—Second Reading of Land Purchase Bill for Ireland—Anglo-German and Anglo-French agreements in Africa—Winding up of Session—Prorogation.

IN the foregoing Chapters, events have been recounted which were, on the whole, victories for the good cause, as we regarded it. That review comprised the four years 1886, 1887, 1888 and 1889. But in this the fifth year, 1890, a different tale has to be told. The difficulties were less than those previously encountered, the Parliamentary horizon was clearer than before. Outside Parliament several bye-elections had gone against us, proportionably augmenting the Gladstonian strength, and causing Mr. Gladstone to dream of sweeping the country at the next general election. But inside Parliament, the momentum of accumulated success supplied

force for further efforts. Nevertheless, failure within the House was now for the first time to be apparent. This, too, arose from errors of which the gravity became by degrees apparent, which nearly cost the Government its life, and brought it to the verge of discomfiture. They were to some extent rectified with a rallying firmness. But they could never be fully retrieved; and they caused a loss of time which impaired, though it did not mar, the fulfilment of the Unionist programme during this Parliament.

On Tuesday, February 11th, 1889, Parliament re-assembled after a somewhat better Recess than had during recent years been enjoyed. Before the Address, in response to the Queen's Speech, could be moved, Mr. Gladstone urged that the allegations made by the *Times* newspaper, in 1887 and in previous years, against Mr. Parnell and certain other Members of the House, should in 1890 be treated as a breach of privilege—although trial and judgment had been largely obtained before the Judicial Commission appointed by Parliament, and partly also before the Courts of Justice, upon these very allegations. This application was rejected by a large majority, but it was so extraordinary that some cause in the background had to be sought for. The final Report

of the Parnell Commission having been printed, was just being placed in the hands of Members. Presumably the Opposition Leader had surmised that the substance of this Report would be unfavourable to the Parnellite Party. Therefore he would be anxious to counteract such effect, by raising the dust which must arise from a controversy about Privilege.

The Address, in response to the Royal Speech, was moved on Wednesday the 12th by Mr. Royden, a typical Liverpool Member, who spoke in Court dress, and seconded by Lord Brooke (eldest son of the Earl of Warwick), who wore military uniform. The debate lasted for about a fortnight, that is till the 24th of February, when the Address was voted. Thus the precedent began to be established for occupying the first fortnight of the Session with the Address. This practice gradually found favour with Private Members, as it afforded one of the few chances remaining to them for the performance of what they deemed to be their duty to their constituents.

Mr. W. H. Smith made an important speech regarding the policy of the Administration. He would *inprimis* replace the abortive Tithes measure

of last Session by a revised and more complete Bill on that subject. He would have a Land Purchase Bill for Ireland virtually in extension of the existing Ashbourne Act, for enabling the Irish peasantry to become to some extent the owners of the land they cultivated. This would be followed by a measure for Local Government in Ireland, which measure he retained as an integral part of the Unionist programme. Thus he allowed us to form the idea that Land Purchase was to be a sort of prelude to Local Government, and was to provide a class of peasant proprietors who could be trusted with powers of self-government in local affairs. Then he intimated that the project of Free or Assisted Education would not be undertaken this Session. We were surprised at this, because a large surplus was supposed to be impending for the coming Budget of the year. If no part of the surplus should be allotted to this educational purpose, to what, we asked ourselves, would it be devoted? We little thought of one peculiar purpose to which it was destined to be applied, as will be seen hereafter.

Then followed a really "full-dress debate" on the Address, national in its scope, and imperial in its range.

First of all the Nationalists put a bold face on the Report of the Parnell Commission just mentioned. At one moment they seemed to regard it as a vindication of innocence. Why then, we asked among ourselves, did they at another moment receive the mention of it with loud derision? Because it was distinctly adverse to some of them. Mr. Parnell, with a triumphant air, which seemed to us like effrontery, asked Mr. W. H. Smith what action would be taken on this Report, and was informed that its adoption by the House would be proposed as soon as the Address had been passed. He then moved a hostile amendment about the Irish Administration. Thereon Mr. William O'Brien delivered one of his periodical philippics, with intonation ranging from the highest to the deepest notes in the oratorical gamut. His admirers spoke of it as tempestuous vehemence; his opponents thought it was raving rhapsody; but friend and foe admitted that it was a wondrous performance, well worth witnessing—for a few minutes at least. On the other hand we had two orations in a certain grand style which had become familiar to us, from Colonel Saunderson and Mr. T. Wallace Russell, both of whom had charged them-

selves with the mission of exposing Nationalist doings. Colonel Saunderson would fling tremendous accusations against the Nationalists with a happy knack of humour that made them laugh despite themselves, and perhaps prevented their realizing at the moment how damaging the indictment was. Mr. Russell struck out, so to speak, with the gloves off, and with scathing scorn he hurled his facts at them like javelins. They applied with truth to some of his sentences the simile of tomahawk.

Another evening the heated atmosphere cooled down serenely when an educational amendment about "free education" was moved by Mr. Arthur Acland—a man destined to rise high in the department of education. A really national debate followed, in which I had to take a part on account of my special experience in the School Board for London. At no time did the House appear to so good an advantage as when an educational debate was in progress. Despite differences of opinion the subject aroused no passionate strivings, evoked no cheers with counter cheers, was not attractive to any save those conversant with it, was attended by only a certain number of Members, namely, those

who meant to listen, to speak, to reflect, to understand.

Next an amendment was moved blaming the Ministers for not proceeding with a measure for District Councils, in continuation of the measure already passed for County Councils. This was one of those Opposition movements which may be in some respects sincere. Doubtless the Opposition were quite candid in saying that District Councils, or Parish Councils as they are now called, ought to form a subject of legislation. Subsequent experience has convinced some of us, that at this very time the Government ought to have produced its Bill for this purpose. The present movement, however, was meant to raise an awkward issue. This induced Mr. Jesse Collings to make another of his telling speeches on our side, from a Liberal Unionist point of view. He rated the Gladstonians soundly for always preaching about these things, when they had caused all British reforms to be postponed in favour of an impossible Home Rule for Ireland. He praised the Conservatives for their modest professions and their comparatively large performances. As he had been once in the very centre of the British-Radical

camp, these utterances of his were specially significant.

A semi-socialistic amendment was moved by Mr. Cunningham Graham, a Scotch Member who had been for some time domiciled in America. He was a handsome man, with impassioned diction and gesture, a sincere fanatic with the courage of his convictions. His delivery of a characteristic oration was a sight worth seeing. This occasion provoked a fine reply from Mr. Bradlaugh. Inasmuch as he was destined soon to disappear from these mortal scenes, I may remark that since he was allowed in January, 1886, to take the oath at the Table, he had made so much headway as to become quite a conspicuous figure in the House. In debate he represented the heavy artillery, with massive figure, resonant voice, imposing gesture. Though many of his speeches had been wrong, in our opinion, yet of late years he had shewn none of that aggressive free-thought with which he had previously been debited. So entirely did he refrain from giving vent to objectionable sentiments, that we hoped he had fallen into a better frame of mind. On this day he spoke up manfully for sound social doctrines. Indeed, nothing could be better, from our point of

view, and almost every sentence of his was greeted by our cheers.

Respecting Foreign Affairs a very interesting and well-informed speech was made by Mr., afterwards Sir Henry, Howorth, about the then pending questions with Portugal in Southern Africa. Mr. James Bryce, as ex-Under Secretary of State, drew attention to the political complications caused by Turkish administration in Asia Minor.

Sir John Gorst was despatched to Berlin, as principal British representative at the Labour Conference assembled there under the auspices of the German Emperor.

On the 25th of February the Address in reply to the Queen's Speech was voted. On the 3rd of March Mr. W. H. Smith moved that the House do adopt *simpliciter* the Report of the Parnell Commission. He congratulated Mr. Parnell and others on being acquitted on some of the charges, and on some of the counts of the general indictment. But he did not shrink from contending that several of the Nationalist Members had been condemned on various charges, and on several counts. He concluded that the condemnation must be taken together with the acquittal, and the whole

Report approved, with thanks to the learned Judges.

Then Mr. Gladstone rose to move an amendment. For two hours he poured forth a stream of eloquence, like molten and liquid gold from the furnace, with intonation and gesticulation quite marvellous for a man of his advanced age. After this warm praise of his eloquence my commendation must stop. He appeared to us to adopt an eclectic process—to dwell on the points of the Report that were favourable to the Parnellites as being judicial utterances—to ignore those points which were unfavourable as being extra-judicial, or *obiter dicta*, or merely political deliverances—to misread history—to virtually palliate conspiracy, boycotting, and terrorism—to indirectly extenuate offences if they conduced to the passing of humane legislation. He concluded by reiterating the old accusation against the Conservative Party for having caballed with the Nationalists in 1885. This accusation was at once repelled by Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, then President of the Board of Trade, in the first combative speech he had made since his return to us with eyesight restored. Having been our Leader in 1885 he was able to

discharge this duty with entire effect. *Inter alia* he swooped down on Sir William Harcourt, who, apparently in displeasure, walked out, followed by laughter and cheers from our men. Mr. Sexton spoke for three hours with excessive elaboration, justifying his own career from its beginning. This was said by our men to be his "*apologia pro vitâ suâ*." Then several forensic speeches of the highest merit were made by the Members who had been Counsel on one side or the other before the Commission—by Sir Charles Russell, whose speech was an abbreviation of his great oration to the Judges—by Sir Richard Webster, by Mr. Reid, and by Mr. Asquith, who seemed to essay the arduous task of explaining away the conduct of the Clann-Gael across the Atlantic. This battle of the legal giants was concluded by Sir Henry James in one of the most stately orations I ever heard. The galleries for Members, for Peers, for strangers, were all crowded during its delivery. After that, Mr. Gladstone's amendment was rejected by a majority of 71, which showed that, owing to bye-elections, our effective numbers had somewhat decreased. This amendment having been rejected, the debate on the main question, namely, the

adoption of the Report of the Commission, was continued. This was signalized by a speech from Lord Randolph Churchill, delivered in his most trenchant and impressive manner. He attacked the Government for having appointed the Parnell Commission in 1888, acknowledged that he ought to have openly opposed it at the time, but added that he had given the Ministers a written statement of his objections—of which statement we, of course, had never heard. He then went on to belabour the Nationalists, allowing them the benefit of the acquittal in the Report, but pressing hard against them the condemnation. A strange episode ensued : for Mr. Louis Jennings, a Member of literary fame, who was supposed to be a henchman of Lord Randolph Churchill, had a motion on the notice-paper regarding the *Times*. He rose and said he would refrain from moving his amendment, for fear of being thought to concur in Lord Randolph Churchill's action, from which he wished to dissociate himself. That night, the 12th of March, the Report of the Commission was adopted, after a division, by our full normal majority. Notwithstanding the acquittal of Mr. Parnell himself, the Report was held by our

men to embody a verdict adverse to many of the Nationalist Members, and against the Parnellite Party in several grave matters. It was thought by us to be a text-book of proved facts regarding their proceedings, and to be fraught with irreparable damage to the Parnellite cause.

In these days the Agricultural Committee of Conservative County Members used to meet privately under the chairmanship of Sir Walter Barttelot. He succeeded Mr. Chaplin, who was our first Chairman, and had become Minister of Agriculture. We quite understood that the Tithes Bill was the measure on which the Government would be most open to successful attack in detail.

On the 20th of March there was a meeting of the Party at the Carlton Club, when Lord Salisbury reminded us that we had run a Parliamentary course of four years, and that two years or more remained to us in which to try and complete the programme of Unionist policy. Suitable allusion was made to the Tithes Bill, and cordial assurances were exchanged.

On the 24th of March Mr. Balfour introduced the Land Purchase and Congested Districts Bill for Ireland, whereby monies might be advanced up to

thirty millions sterling on British credit, and with unexceptionable security, to enable Irish tenants to become owners of their holdings. After a brief but moderate and generous speech from Mr. Gladstone, the Bill was read the first time without a division, to our glad surprise.

On the 27th of March the Tithes Bill was brought forward for Second Reading by Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, in an official speech of the very first order. The main point was this, that the liability for paying the tithe, which had heretofore in practice fallen on the tenant, would be fixed upon the landlord. The debate which followed soon elicited speeches from the county gentlemen, Sir Walter Barttelot, Sir Richard Paget, Mr. Stanley Leighton—from the Welsh Members, well represented by Mr. Talbot, the father of the House, and by Mr. Stuart Rendel—from the Non-conformists, by Mr. Picton and others. As the subject affected the property of the Church of England, the strangers' galleries were much crowded on this occasion. When Sir William Harcourt rose from the Front Opposition Bench there was much curiosity among us to see how he would oppose the Bill, as he was understood to have approved

of its principle outside Parliament. He did not oppose the principle, but he employed all his skill in destroying the Bill by criticism of its details. Mr. Cecil Raikes replied brilliantly well on our side, and the Second Reading was carried by a majority of 130.

Some progress was made with the business of Supply, and then, on Tuesday the 2nd of April, we adjourned till the 14th for the Easter Recess.

We reassembled after Easter on the 15th of April, and on Tuesday the 17th we mustered in full strength to hear Mr. Goschen introduce his fourth Budget. This was to be a prosperity Budget, and therefore a popular one, when the spoils of the surplus came to be distributed. In our Chancellor of the Exchequer we had a financier of the highest repute, and of proved success. We were consequently in good spirits, expecting a financial programme which would lend additional brightness to the prospects of a Session more promising than any we had yet seen. Yet—such is the vanity of Parliamentary hopes—it so happened that this was the last cheerful day for us this Session. For on this very evening there arose over the horizon

the first of those clouds which soon grew and grew till our political sky became overcast.

For more than two hours Mr. Goschen's speech was the finest financial statement I ever heard. The revival of trade, which was about reaching the highest point ever known in our commercial history—and the consequent progress of the revenue,—were sketched in masterly style. The fiscal effect, good as it was financially, was darkened morally by the fact that the gain in revenue was mainly due to alcohol. The idea that the national drink-bill should rise and fall with rising or falling prosperity, like the barometer with the weather, filled many minds with regret. The Budget speech sparkled with brilliant phrases, such as—"Men had toasted the revival of prosperity, some resorting to the beer barrel, some to the spirit bottle, some to the decanter"—"Fleeting revivals of trade followed by decline or relapse, like the false dawns known in the East"—"The Chancellor of the Exchequer sitting tight on the treasure-chest"—"Gold outside the coinage chiefly used for wedding-rings as articles of permanent and unavoidable necessity"—and so forth. His peroration, summarizing the many and diverse

interests benefited by this Budget, was comprehensive as well as eloquent, and, like the rest of the oration, was most cordially received. But just towards the end, in conjunction with several happy announcements, he made one announcement which dashed our joy, and fell on our ear with ominous sound. There was to be a plan for buying up a certain number of public-houses from time to time, with compensation to the owners out of moneys to be raised from the consumption of liquor. As he uttered the words, we who were sitting immediately behind him looked in each others' faces, with wonder at the first moment, and dismay at the next. Was not this a repetition of the very error which had cost the Government so dear the year before last? We could only hope that, with the light of such experience, they had made ready a way out of any difficulty that might present itself.

We found, however, but too soon, that this proposal about the public-houses had aroused once more in the Temperance Party inside the House (as doubtless in the Party outside also) that strenuous opposition which we had encountered in 1888. The Resolutions and legislative proceedings, con-

sequent on the Budget, went on swimmingly so far as they were free from this proposal. But those proceedings which involved this proposal were soon brought to a deadlock by the Opposition, under the guidance of Mr. Caine, Sir Wilfrid Lawson, and others. However, the Government would not, indeed could not, yield at the outset. A good month and more remained before Whitsuntide, and they were promised the unflinching support of their followers. They therefore declared their resolve to pass the compensation for public-houses before Whitsuntide. The efforts we made to this end were strenuous, but were successfully obstructed by the Opposition. So we had to adjourn for Whitsuntide on the 23rd of May, *re infectâ*, and with the compensation clauses still pending. Thus the Session had already become spoilt owing to this single cause, this one untoward circumstance.

When the House re-assembled on June the 2nd after the Whitsuntide Recess, there was a gloom in our Party such as I had never before witnessed. An unlooked-for obstacle, not previously included in any programme, had been interjected by the Government in the mid-stream of the Session. The

Ministers had, we understood, been impressed with the increase in the consumption of liquor, and were honestly anxious to apply a check. They had feared opposition from the Liquor Trade, but the Trade had loyally acquiesced. They hoped that the Temperance Party would also acquiesce, from regard to the moral object in view. We approved of the proposal for compensation as equitable and reasonable. Had it been deemed sufficiently important to be placed in the fore-front of a Session with time before us, we would willingly have fought it out. But to introduce it thus, in the midst of a great legislative programme, and in the very thick of a heavy-laden Session, was, we thought, simple fatuity. Taken by surprise, we had loyally stood by our Ministers, though as yet in vain. We must strive to push or pull them through the crisis of this particular measure. But there was the dilemma regarding the other measures which were far larger and more important, namely, the Tithes and the Irish Land Purchase. The chance of passing them this summer had been lost. Were they to be abandoned—an abhorrent idea—or were they to be dropped for this summer sitting, to be taken up in an autumn sitting? But to rely on an

autumn sitting for the passage of such Bills as these, would not that be a perilous experiment?

Meanwhile the Opposition had gained strength. A heretofore successful Ministry, with a great majority, had been baffled at last and for a time defied. This gave spirit and impetus to obstruction, which was now attempted all along the line of sessional business, merely to interpose delay, with the knowledge that every day, almost every hour, thus spoiled must affect the policy of the Government. I remember painfully well the forenoon of Friday the 13th of June, as being the darkest moment for the Conservative Party that I had ever known. At that hour Lord Salisbury convened at the Carlton Club one of those meetings which are held from time to time in Parliamentary crises. This meeting, however, served not to strengthen the position but to expose its weakness. Lord Salisbury himself was received with all that respectful regard which he never failed to ensure from us all. But after he had spoken, the signs of impatience and dissatisfaction with our Ministers in the Commons began to appear. And though our unswerving support was promised as on former occasions, yet the rumour got abroad that

the Carlton meeting had resulted unfavourably. Consequently on reaching our places in the House that afternoon, we found that Mr. W. H. Smith deferred making his expected statement about the business of the Session, and that the Opposition were more defiant and aggressive than ever. The Liberal Unionists, doubtless perceiving the danger, held a meeting under Lord Hartington's presidency and loyally resolved to support the Government. So for a while the Ministers persevered in the compensation measure.

Meanwhile the Opposition had unintentionally strengthened our hands by arraigning Mr. Balfour's administration in Ireland. This at once drew our whole Party into solid array. A furious assault delivered by Mr. John Morley and his colleagues was brilliantly repulsed. Thereon a majority of nearly a hundred was obtained. It was said at the moment on our side that this had "pulled our men together." The saying, however, went to prove that there had been some loosening of discipline in the Party.

As the compensation measure, however, proceeded in the Committee of the whole House, and as divisions were frequently challenged, the ma-

majorities for the Government dwindled—partly owing to the disintegration which often accompanies misfortune. At length one afternoon in the month of June the majority fell to four, representing a narrow escape from defeat. This occurred on what is called “a snap division,” which took place earlier than was expected on the Ascot Cup day, before the return of a portion of our men. It was said that the chagrin of Mr. Labouchere was amusing to behold, when he found that he had only just missed placing the Government in a minority. Still the thought, that on some wild evening even this powerful and successful Government might be overthrown, must have crossed the minds of many at this time. Most of our men deemed that whatever might be the cause of the crisis, they were all the more obliged to stand firm because the time was critical. Some gave to the Leader written assurances of support. Respecting the introduction of the compensation proposal, we speculated as to how the blunder arose and with whom the fault lay; but none of us ever discovered this.

By way of illustrating a Member's life, I may describe a mishap which befell myself one Thursday

afternoon in this month. I had been in the House that day serving on a Committee upstairs since eleven o'clock. At three I attended the School Board for London, and returned to the House by four. Being anxious to go back to the Board for a while to get my financial budget passed, I consulted our Whips, who thought I might safely go if I returned by five, as a division was expected before six. Not content with that, I examined the Notice paper and found several hostile motions which our opponents were interested in moving, and which, if moved, would carry us far beyond five o'clock. So I went back to the Board, got my budget passed, and returned to the House five minutes before the time agreed upon. But I found that the division had just been called, and rushed up to the outer lobby only to see the door of the House being inexorably closed. This was one of the very few divisions that I missed that Session. The fact was that the Opposition, perceiving their chance, had shut off their own motions above-mentioned, in order to precipitate the division. Doubtless the adventures of several among my comrades that afternoon were similar to my own.

Whatever we might think of the line taken by the Temperance Party, the Liquor Trade, who might really have had some reason for opposition, resolved loyally to support the Licensing measure, and even at the eleventh hour prepared a monster petition in favour of these clauses in the Bill.

On the 23rd of June it was understood that some of the Liberal Unionists would propose an amendment which we could never accept, limiting the time, within which compensation should be granted, to ten years. If this should cause any defection from our ranks, then the fate of the Bill would be sealed. Thereafter Mr. W. H. Smith announced that the Government would not proceed with it this Session, but would reserve the money already set apart for it to be available for any Licensing measure that might be passed the next Session—a process which is called “ear-marking.” The Opposition were, however, still discontented. The next day Mr. Timothy Healy, to our surprise, asked the Speaker whether this process was constitutional according to the practice of the House. The Speaker—who apparently must have received a private notice of some such question—replied that it was not. Thereon Mr. W. H. Smith abandoned

the measure, that is, withdrew the Licensing clauses from the Local Taxation Bill.

It was already admitted that the business of the Session had arrived at a deadlock which must be loosened, or was entangled in a Gordian knot which must be cut. The suggestion was that the two principal measures—for Tithes and Land Purchase—should be suspended at the beginning of their Committee stage, and from that point taken up again the next Session. The Government would try to act on this view, acknowledging, however, that it was a new departure of much consequence.

On Tuesday, the 17th of June, Mr. W. H. Smith in a somewhat feeble and harassed manner produced the draft of a Standing Order, whereby particular Bills, that had advanced up to a certain stage in one Session, might be resumed in the following Session at the point where they had left off. On the 24th, at Mr. Gladstone's instance, this draft was referred to a Committee, on which twenty-one Members were appointed to sit on some subsequent date. By July the 8th it was known that the Members of this Committee were at loggerheads among themselves. As regards the proposed Order, the Opposition would say that it was their business to

oppose. We now knew the main policy of the Session to be wrecked, and our only anxiety was to know where we were to be stranded. On Thursday the 10th, Mr. W. H. Smith announced that the Standing Order would be abandoned and with it the Bills for Tithes and Land Purchase, which would be taken up afresh in an Autumn Session during November. We were startled on hearing this, which was the first notice we had that there would be an Autumn Session. According to that, the Session of 1890 would end in August. A fresh Session for 1890-1 would begin in November, 1890, and after a brief interlude at Christmas would be resumed in February 1891, to continue till August of that year. The Opposition were manifestly displeased, because they saw that thereby our Government would carry its points. On the other hand the temper of our men instantly improved, as they knew the worst in the present Session and would brace themselves for the next one.

About this time there was, we believed, a movement of some sort, for inducing Lord Randolph Churchill to return to high office. The particulars of that movement—if it really existed—we never sought to know, so far as he was concerned.

No doubt some of our men, forgetting the instances in which he had caused anxiety to our Party since 1887, fixed their gaze on his splendid services in the past. They still believed in his genius for politics and they thought that, under his leadership, the two errors committed by our able and successful Government,—the Parnell Commission and the Licensing clauses,—might have been avoided. There was an entertainment given to him by some of his Parliamentary comrades, which apparently had a political significance. Whatever may have been the exact truth, the affair did not advance to any practical stage.

The programme of legislation having been thus bereft of its two principal headings, the Session was left without any leading measure. But its record, though defective in this cardinal quality, was to be made up by lesser measures of practical usefulness. Once our men had made up their minds for this eventuality, they girded themselves with alacrity for the legislative task that still remained.

Among these remaining measures was that for the Superannuation of the Police in Great Britain. This had in the Metropolitan area been compli-

cated by the resignation of Mr. Monro, the Commissioner of Police, by reason of dissatisfaction with the terms, as not being good enough. On the other hand, some Members, advanced Liberals, thought the concessions unduly favourable. So the two Bills for England and Scotland met with many impediments in detail from certain Members, one of whom called himself "a gorilla of debate."

The Bill to enable Her Majesty to assent to a Bill for conferring a constitution on Western Australia was passed. It had been reported upon by a Select Committee (of which I was a member) under the able chairmanship of Baron de Worms, Under Secretary for the Colonies, after taking much valuable evidence of witnesses from the Colony.

The Bill to provide for the better housing of the working classes was passed after very full, though friendly, discussion, in which Members from all quarters of the House co-operated with a unanimous regard for social improvement.

The London County Council since the beginning of its work in 1889 had showed an ambition to aggrandize its own position and *amplificare jurisdictionem*. In this respect our men, especially some Metropolitan Members, Mr. Kimber of Wandsworth,

and others, endeavoured to impose a judicious check. The large majority of the Metropolitan Members were Conservatives, and they formed themselves into an organization of which Sir Algernon Borthwick (of South Kensington) was the President.

The printed Table of the General Public Acts of the Session comprised various subjects, such as pleuro-pneumonia—military barracks—consolidation of lunacy laws—deeds of arrangement—partnership—the census—amendment of public health laws—bankruptcy—and other topics, bringing the total number of these Acts, greater and lesser, to seventy-two.

About the end of July and the beginning of August there was an apparent concatenation of circumstances, which was spoken of very much by us among ourselves in the lobbies and precincts. Certain industrial strikes were pending or impending. Some acts of insubordination had occurred in the 2nd Battalion of the Grenadier Guards. A strike broke out in a part of the Metropolitan police, and threatened to spread further. Still more serious insubordination occurred among large numbers of the men employed in the London

Post Office, and was repressed by the Postmaster-General, Mr. Cecil Raikes, with admirable skill and firmness. We thought there was reason to fear that the Socialist Party took an ominous interest in these movements. Interpellations were frequently made in the House regarding these events. In respect to the Post-Office men striking or preparing to strike, speeches were uttered by some Members which we deplored.

Some splendour was shed over the declining days of the Session by the news of the Anglo-German Agreement in Eastern Africa. We had long been disquieted by reports of German aggression in Uganda; and this anxiety had deepened since the return of Mr. H. M. Stanley's mission. Now, however, we noticed that Mr. Stanley himself accorded the highest praise to the arrangement made by Lord Salisbury. No doubt some of us winced on hearing that Heligoland was to be ceded to Germany. Still, the exclusive protectorate of Zanzibar, and the undisputed access to the Lake Victoria Nyanza, seemed to be more than an equivalent. It sounded strange to hear some of the advanced Liberals, especially Mr. Bryce, say that a bad bargain had been made, which seemed

to imply that more should be required from Germany. Earlier in the Session some of the Liberal Members had been advocating what was virtually a forward policy for Britain in Eastern Africa. The proceedings in the House virtually confirming the cession of Heligoland passed off without any embarrassing discussion. We then asked ourselves whether our protectorate of Zanzibar would remain undisputed ; for France was understood to claim some status there. We were assured that France had yielded that pretension to us, in consideration of our acknowledging her exclusive protectorate of Madagascar. That was followed by the production of an Anglo-French agreement for Western Africa, acknowledging the French sphere north of Lake Chad, but securing to a British Company the territories of the Niger. All this received in the House an approval almost unanimous, save for a protest which arose from some Members on behalf of the Protestant Missions in Madagascar. But an assurance was received from France that these Missions would be respected. On the whole, these two great Conventions, determining the British sphere of influence in Eastern and Western Africa, were most favourably received on both sides of the

House, and added lustre to the repute of our Foreign Office, which already was bright indeed.

At length the Indian Budget was produced. Two discussions were undertaken on the same subject during the same night. On the motion that the Speaker do leave the Chair, a general discussion on the Indian Empire took place. Then the House resolved itself into Committee, and the accounts of the year were criticized; after which a formal Resolution was passed. The attendance of Members was extremely thin; still the speeches would be reported for the information of all concerned. The plan of placing the Indian Accounts in the very rear of all business continued the same every year, and for this the House has been blamed by some. But it proved unavoidable, and many who best know all the circumstances at home and abroad, have hardly regretted the fact. On the other hand, the House has never been chargeable with neglect of India. Year after year Members, having made the grand tour of the East, have returned to the House more or less informed, and holding enlightened and philanthropic theories, which they embodied in Amendments to the Address and in Resolutions on

Private Members' evenings. In this Parliament, as compared with former Parliaments, there have been more Members practically versed in Indian affairs. By Questions to Ministers, and other means, they were able to safeguard the interests of that Empire.

The work of Supply moved laboriously to its end, with all that distressing friction to which we had become habituated. We had one all-night sitting, for the purpose of carrying through the host of obstructions the beneficent scheme known as the Irish Light Railways Bill, when Mr. Balfour, who was in charge of the Bill, showed Parliamentary qualities of the highest order. On the 18th of August the welcome prorogation took place.

CHAPTER IX.

SESSION OF 1890-1.

Meeting of Parliament, November 25th, 1890—Address in reply to the Queen's Speech passed without any long debate—Meeting of Nationalist Members in Committee Room—Deposition of Mr. Parnell from the Leadership—His Manifesto—Tithes Bill and Irish Land Purchase Bill read a second time—Adjournment of the House, December 9th—Parliament re-assembles, January 22nd—Tithes Bill read a third time, February 12th—Irish Land Purchase Bill in Committee, April 13th—The Budget, April 23rd—Grant of money from the General Treasury as compensation for fees remitted in Public Elementary Schools—Irish Land Purchase Bill read a third time, June 16th—Bill for Free or Assisted Education produced, June 22nd—Passed, July 9th—Arbitration with the United States regarding disputes in Behring Sea and the North Pacific—Completion of Supply—Prorogation, August 5th—Death of Mr. W. H. Smith.

HERETOFORE our Sessions have marched with the annual spaces of time, one for each year. But now we have a Session beginning near the end of one year and extending through the following year, with a short break only at Christmastide between the two years.

On Tuesday the 25th of November (1890) Parliament re-assembled after a comparatively short Recess of a little over three months. The Members

met once more in the outer Lobby with ruddy faces in the wintry air, contrasting with the pallid care-worn visages of last summer. The Prayers were read by our new chaplain, Archdeacon Farrar, the distinguished author, for the first time. Before he entered, however, the Clerk at the Table, Mr. (now Sir Reginald) Palgrave, reported to us that the Speaker would not be present. This announcement had been expected, for Mr. Peel was known to be suffering from domestic affliction, with which the House duly expressed its sympathy. The Chairman of Committees, Mr. Leonard Courtney, acted as Speaker during the early part of this Session.

The substance of the Queen's Speech was a foregone conclusion. The two measures handed on from the last Session, relating to Irish Land Purchase and to Tithes in England, including Wales, were at once to be proceeded with during this the Autumnal Sitting. To them were added two other measures relating to Free or Assisted Education and to Scotch Private Bills, which would be taken up at the sitting of the coming year. Then followed a list of measures, larger or smaller, to be taken up at that convenient season which never arrives.

The Address was moved by Colonel Kenyon Slaney in the uniform of the Foot Guards. It was seconded by Mr. (now Sir Thomas) Forrest Fulton in Court dress, with one of the neatest speeches I ever heard on occasions of this kind. The Address was arranged in the simplest form, merely thanking the Sovereign for the gracious speech, instead of dealing as heretofore with the Speech paragraph by paragraph. Then, after that one evening's debate, it was passed by midnight, to our glad surprise. Indeed, such despatch was unprecedented in our experience. We attributed it to a very particular cause, namely this, that the Opposition had been thrown into somewhat sudden embarrassment by an untoward event.

Shortly before the re-assembling of Parliament the trial of the divorce case "*O'Shea versus Charles Stewart Parnell*" had taken place. Mr. Parnell had virtually made no defence, and judgment had been decreed against him. On the 24th of November, the day before the meeting of Parliament, Mr. Gladstone had written a letter which virtually suggested Mr. Parnell's retirement from the Leadership. A meeting of the Nationalist Members was held just afterwards in a Committee-room of the House, and

Mr. Parnell was unanimously re-elected Leader. At that moment the existence of Mr. Gladstone's letter was not known to anyone save Mr. Parnell himself, and one or two others perhaps. But it immediately became known, and then the Nationalists held a further meeting in one of the Committee-rooms upstairs. For a fortnight or more this room became a focus of interest, and the cynosure of all political eyes. Inside it the proceedings must have been boisterous and tumultuous. According to the report of the attendants on duty, the uproar of voices penetrated through the closed doors and resounded down the long corridor. Enough transpired to show that most of the Nationalists wished Mr. Parnell to resign the Leadership to which he had just been re-elected—not apparently on moral grounds relating to his conduct socially, but on political grounds in reference to the interests of the Nationalist Party and the safety of the Home Rule cause. It was represented to him that without the British Gladstonians, no Home Rule Bill would have a chance—that they would not consent to act with the Nationalists under his Leadership, and that therefore he must perforce resign. Nothing daunted, he refused to yield, and being still Leader, he occupied

the Chair through the meetings day after day in Room 15. Thus he and his contrived by all the arts of obstruction to frustrate the very plain motion that he should quit the Chair. His opponents found it easy enough to induct him into that place, but impossible to unseat him. We understood that they never did succeed in putting the question to a decisive vote, or in getting him out of the Chair. I imagine that never were his skill, resourcefulness, coolness, nerve and resolution more signally evinced than during these stormy days, when, like a stag at bay, he faced with firmest front his own angry followers. At length the majority went to another Committee-room, and meeting there elected Mr. Justin M'Carthy to be their Leader—the minority presumably remaining faithful to Mr. Parnell. Thus two sections of the Nationalist Party came into existence, one that of the Parnellites, the other that of the Anti-Parnellites. Immediately the Anti-Parnellites, between forty and fifty strong, proceeded to their places in the Chamber below the Gangway, and Mr. Justin M'Carthy sat in the very seat where Mr. Parnell used to sit. He at once took occasion to rise, amidst their acclamations, and made a formal motion on the Nationalist

side, just enough to assert his new position. His literary fame made him an ornament to the Party. Shortly Mr. Parnell entered, looking crestfallen perhaps, but still undismayed.

After the publication of Mr. Gladstone's letter, a manifesto from Mr. Parnell appeared as an address to the Irish people. He literally rounded on Mr. Gladstone, by divulging certain conditions alleged to have been discussed in private at Hawarden Castle. Apparently he wished to show that he was now being sacrificed by the Gladstonians—in his own phrase, thrown to the wolves—not for any moral or social reason, but in order to get rid of him and his uncompromising politics.

Various manifestations from the Nonconformist bodies of Britain seem about this time to have reached Mr. Gladstone and the Gladstonians. As these bodies formed part of the back-bone of the Party on whom Mr. Gladstone relied for carrying Home Rule, their utterances could not be disregarded, and we understood that they were resolved to suspend further co-operation with the Nationalist Party so long as Mr. Parnell remained at its head. Their objection was solely of a moral and social character.

Then the Roman Catholic hierarchy of Ireland came forward with a declaration against Mr. Parnell's social offence. This, as might be expected, was couched in the most appropriate terms. But it came somewhat late, and the delay in its issue detracted from its effect. It proved, however, to be an important turning-point in Nationalist politics, as will be seen hereafter. The Anti-Parnellites issued their manifesto as a counter-blast to Mr. Parnell, which, from their point of view, was sensible and judicious.

Apart from the series of episodes above described, the course of this Autumnal Sitting ran smoothly enough. The Gladstonian Opposition was, for a moment, almost paralyzed, and the Nationalists ceased for a while from troubling us. This affair did, indeed, prove the extent to which the Nationalist problem had dominated the political thoughts of the British House of Commons.

The consequences of the failure of the crops in parts of Ireland were developing themselves during the Autumn. Bills were passed for additional railways, to give employment to the distressed, and for seed-potatoes to restore the crops. In obtaining a Vote in Supply on the 4th of December for the relief

of distress in certain districts of Ireland, Mr. Balfour made a speech which was much admired for its exhaustiveness, its moderation, and its sympathetic spirit. The Tithes Bill, having been argued out during the preceding Session, passed the Second Reading easily and quickly. The Irish Land Purchase and Congested Districts Bill was re-arranged and simplified by the separation from it of the provisions regarding the Land Commission, which were included in a separate Bill. Mr. Parnell had never objected to the measure, which he regarded as a British boon conceded to Ireland. He had, in the previous Session, been drawn unwillingly into an attitude of resistance. But now he went overtly into the division lobby with us—in a combination that suggested many strange reflections. Both the Land Bills and the Tithes Bill were, after Second Reading, forwarded into the Committee stage, some preliminary Instructions having been disposed of. After a sitting of a brief fortnight we adjourned, well before Christmas, with some cheerfulness.

The Christmas Vacation of 1890–91 lasted from the 9th of December to the 22nd of January, when the work of the Session was resumed. Thus, after the first, or preliminary sitting before Christmas,

the second, or principal sitting was begun on the 22nd of January, 1891. The House proceeded straight to business, and the Lord Advocate (Robertson) moved the Second Reading of his measure regarding Scotch Private Bills. It was afterwards opposed by some Scotch Members on grounds which we did not appreciate.

Before we succeeded in making way with the main business of the Session, several episodes occurred. Mr. Bradlaugh had moved that the Orders prior to 1885, which precluded him from taking the oath at the Table, should be expunged from the records of the House. For such a cancellation some precedents in our Parliamentary history might be found. But this was obviously objectionable, if the wrong, real or alleged, had been redressed. In this case, redress had been practically afforded, though most of us still doubted whether there had been any wrong at all. The Government evidently were of the same opinion with us, and wished to resist the proposal. Meanwhile Mr. Bradlaugh was in bed, sick unto death, and anxious to hear before he died that the Orders had been expunged. Nevertheless, when the motion was brought forward in the House, Mr. W. H.

Smith would not yield. Presently Sir Stafford Northcote, the son of the Leader of the Party which had procured the passing of the Orders, hurriedly whispered something to Mr. W. H. Smith, who at once rose and said that out of regard to his honourable friend and other friends present, he would not oppose the motion. The Opposition rejoiced, of course, and the motion was passed straightway. The reason at once transpired, namely, this, that many of the Conservatives had resolved to vote for the Motion, and the Government had no alternative but to give way. The Conservatives above mentioned had apparently been so impressed by Mr. Bradlaugh's conduct in resisting democratic socialism, that they were determined to do him this last favour, without sufficient regard to the effect of the precedent thus set.

On Wednesday the 4th of February, Mr. Gladstone proposed, by a Private Member's Bill, to abolish the disqualification that precluded a Roman Catholic from being appointed Lord Chancellor of England or Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. The raising of this question was an embarrassment to us, because as Protestants we were quite unable

to agree, and had to reject the proposal by a Division,—while we were very sorry to do anything that might seem unfriendly to the English Roman Catholics. It was, however, noteworthy that the Roman Catholic community had never asked for this. So we could not refrain from questioning ourselves, why had Mr. Gladstone made this proposal, for which there were no public grounds apparent?

One night I was so fortunate as to obtain a Second Reading for two Educational Bills; the first for the Regulation of Teachers in Secondary Schools, the second for the Superannuation of Teachers under the School Board for London; both Bills being at the same time referred to Select Committees. As Mover I had to procure the nomination of these two Committees through the Whips of the several Parties. Notwithstanding the courtesy of the Whips and the kindness of my friends, this task was delicate and troublesome in a degree that would be incredible to those who had never been tried in affairs of this sort. With the first Bill, indeed, the difficulties were after some delay overcome. The Committee sat under the Chairmanship of Sir William Hart Dyke, con-

cluded an interesting enquiry, and submitted a satisfactory report. With the second Bill, however, for the Superannuation of Teachers I had trouble untold and indescribable. The elementary teachers in England at large naturally wished to be joined with the London teachers in the scheme, the scope of which had to be widened accordingly. A Committee with a revised reference was formed, myself being Chairman. We made anxiously elaborate enquiries which, however, had to be carried over to another Session.

On the 27th of January we proceeded with the Committee stage of the Tithes Bill, which lasted till the 3rd of February. Thereon Obstruction set in with an obstinacy which we had hardly seen equalled in the worst days of 1887. It was less demonstrative and less violent, but even more ingenious and more indirect. It was conducted mainly by certain Welsh Members belonging to the legal profession, who brought all their acumen to bear on a special policy. Notable among them was Mr. Evans of Glamorganshire; and he played in this Bill much the same part which Mr. Maurice Healy had undertaken, as already described, in the Irish Crimes Bill of 1887. Apparently they did not

wish to abolish or destroy the Tithe, which might be maintained for the ultimate benefit of Nonconformity in event of the Church being disestablished. But they apparently would render the collection of it impracticable, until the desired settlement should be reached. With all their local knowledge and practical experience, they suggested countless amendments which might in effect impede the collection. These devices were overcome by patience and persistency ; so the Bill passed through Committee on the 3rd of February. It was brought up on Report without delay, and apparently would have passed that stage with but little let or hindrance, when, lo and behold ! the Welsh opponents found a new ally in the Irish quarter of all places in the world. The Nationalists wished that an Irish motion, in which Mr. John Morley was concerned, should not come on till a certain day ; so they would fill up the interval of time by prolonging debate on English Tithes ! This they actually did, thereby affording us an object-lesson in the manner whereby Irish Members will treat British business, with a single eye to some question in Ireland. This postponed the completion of the Report stage till the 10th, after which the Third

Reading was obtained on the 12th by a majority of 90, a number above our then normal majority.

On a Private Members' night, February the 20th, the disestablishment of the Church in Wales had been brought forward by the veteran Mr. Dillwyn, whose voice, now tremulously faltering from advanced age, had still the ring of an ancient war-trumpet, and by Mr. Stuart Rendel in mild and mellifluous tones. Mr. Cecil Raikes once more defended the Church, in measured though forcible terms, and with a refined culture recalling the best days of the elder time. The most remarkable defence was that by Mr. Stanley Leighton, who with passionate vehemence and extreme nervous tension carried the war into the country of his Nonconformist opponents. Mr. Gladstone had somehow to spirit away his former declarations. We understood him in effect to say that when he was for maintaining the Establishment in Wales, the political forces were also for it; but now that he deemed the political forces to be against the Establishment, he also must be against it.

Excepting the passage of the Tithes Bill through Parliament, no measure of first-class importance was undertaken before Easter. The adjournment for the

Easter Recess took place on the 24th of March, and the re-assembling on the 7th of April, when Supply business was resumed after the fairly good progress that had been made before Easter.

On the 13th of April the House proceeded with the principal business of the Session, namely, the Committee stage of the Irish Land Purchase and Congested Districts Bill, hoping that the stage would be traversed by Whitsuntide. At the outset Mr. John Morley made a dilatory motion—which may be classed among the worst forms of obstruction—to the effect that the Bill should be postponed till a Bill for Local Government should have been brought forward. Then Mr. Parnell stepped forth for his first important deliverance since his deposition from the Leadership of his Party. He strongly deprecated Mr. Morley's proposal as being a postponement *sine die*. Then some stalwart British Radicals, headed by Mr. Labouchere, objected to the pledging of British security by this Bill or by any other Bill. They would not allow this, even for the sake of their Nationalist allies from Ireland. Their objections touched the very earliest clauses dealing with the creation of a land-stock to provide funds for the Land Purchase. These lasted

from day to day, consuming the greater part of the time that could be allotted to the Bill up to Whitsuntide.

On the 23rd of April Mr. Goschen introduced his fifth Budget in one of those masterly speeches which made the dry bones of finance live again. He showed that the volume and the value of trade in 1890 together formed the grandest aggregate ever known in British commerce. But he warned us that this might prove to be the apex of a curve of prosperity, which, having ascended so far, might begin to descend. His revenue returns showed a fine surplus over expenditure, largely owing to the widely extended consumption of alcoholic liquors. He felicitously summarized the financial results without telling us what he was going to do with the surplus. This revelation he held back till the very end, and then concluded by informing his expectant hearers that the surplus would be devoted to compensating Elementary Schools in England, whether belonging to the School Board system or to the Voluntary system, for the abolition of fees, under a plan to be called free or assisted education. We paused for a moment to hear when this would be, and lo! he said from the 1st of the September following.

We immediately broke up into knots to consider our situation. We had indeed been warned officially that free or assisted education was in the air. Still, nearly two-thirds of the Session had passed, and up to this moment not a word had been definitely said. We had almost made up our minds that nothing would or could be practically done this Session. But now the Ministers had, by this announcement, committed the Party to introduce and pass a Bill even at the latter end of the Session—and this too with the Land Purchase Bill in an unfinished state, offering a boundless field for dilatory motions. Thus we were condemned once more to work under the yoke and pressure of time, and at the mercy of what might prove to be a relentless Opposition.

By this time the concession granted in last year's Budget, for the purpose of reducing the rates of Oceanic Postage, was producing all its beneficial effects. The cheapening of postal charges for the Colonies, the Dependencies, and the external Empire at large, was a boon to all concerned, and tended, as is usual in such cases, to increase of correspondence. Herein the due meed of credit must be accorded to Mr. Cecil Raikes, the Post-

master General. But the prime mover in the matter was Mr. Henniker Heaton, Member for Canterbury, who came originally from Australia. Identifying himself with the subject, he pressed it, as Ministers perhaps thought, in season and out of season. By such persistency, and after years of advocacy, he saw a goodly part of his policy carried out. This example of a Private Member's success should stimulate others to persevere in the House of Commons, whenever they are sure regarding the merits of their cases.

We adjourned for the Whitsuntide Recess on the 15th of May, many of us stricken more or less with the influenza, then prevalent everywhere, and "*re infectâ*" as regards the passage of the Irish Land Purchase Bill through Committee, this being the principal business of the Session. The House re-assembled in scanty numbers on the 22nd, and at once proceeded to enquire whether, during the vacation, the buildings had been thoroughly fumigated and ventilated by way of precaution against influenza!

The first business was to complete the Committee stage of the Irish Land Purchase Bill, and this proceeded with a business-like rapidity.

Mr. Parnell appeared with a sere and yellow look indeed, but still with some fighting power; and he rendered loyal aid to the Bill. Thus we began to see daylight at the end of the long tunnel of delay. The following day, Friday the 22nd, the end was actually reached about half-past ten o'clock at night. As Mr. Courtney, the Chairman, rose from the table and pronounced the formal words, "I report the Bill as amended to the House," a hearty ringing cheer sounded forth from our Benches, not to be forgotten by those who heard it. We could scarcely believe our senses on finding that the Committee stage really was accomplished, for such a thing seemed almost too good to be true.

Then, as is often the case, the House, relieved of an incubus, turned its face straight to business, as an hour and a half still remained before midnight. So the Government, released from its obstructors and tormentors, got several useful measures advanced or disposed of during this brief interval of time. We went home that night with a cheerfulness to which we had been strangers for several weeks.

The Report Stage of the Irish Land Purchase Bill was begun on the 2nd of June and

terminated on the 15th. The passage across this strait proved even rougher than that across the broader channel of the Committee. Mr. Sexton was now to the front making all manner of demands on behalf of the tenants, with assiduous ingenuity, unfailing resourcefulness, and applied knowledge. His old repute, as an orator only, had waned somewhat, because his orations had become attenuated like wire long extended. But his repute as a Party-leader, as a long-headed legislator, and as a Parliamentarian all round, had risen greatly. He was recognized by us as one of the most able and sagacious men in the House, although he was identified with a cause which we disliked, and although he led but a limited number of Members, drawn from classes whose aims we disapproved.

On the 15th of June the midnight rule was suspended, and as the rolling or dropping fire of detailed controversy continued during the afternoon and evening, we consoled ourselves by the thought that, at the latest, the next dawn must see the end of it. At half-past one in the morning I had gone to our division lobby for a few minutes to write a note. Suddenly I heard a jubilant sound permeating the

building. I rushed into the Chamber to see what had happened, and found that it was the cheering which greeted the completion of the Report stage.

The following day the Third Reading was taken, and then a little scene occurred. A British Radical, with a turn for finance, began reiterating some technical arguments, which had in previous debates been worn threadbare. He was assailed by cries of "Divide, Divide;" but he gallantly braved the storm. The more he strained his voice the more did the hostile chorus resound. When this had gone on for several minutes, the Speaker interposed, and the Division was taken. The opponents were the sturdiest of the British Radicals, with Mr. Labouchere and Mr. Storey at their head, who objected to the pledging of British credit, even though the security should be, as it was in this case, the best imaginable. The Nationalists, including Mr. Parnell, voted with us. The Bill was read a third time by 225 to 96, and we were thankful to find that this, the main step in the Session, had been gained by the middle of June.

The diversity of interests between town and country which was sometimes apparent may be illustrated by the controversy in regard to the

Rating of Machinery for local purposes. The manufacturing districts, ably and consistently represented by Mr. Tomlinson, Member for Preston, naturally wished that machinery should be exempt. The rural districts, however, desired otherwise.

During recent Sessions the attention of the House had been specially directed to Elementary Education. Those concerned in the School Board system had made good use of the advantages afforded by law. The Members interested in the Voluntary System, Mr. (now Sir Francis) Powell, Lord Cranborne and others, had ably exerted themselves on its behalf. The Educational Code of one year had for a while been kept in abeyance in order that some special improvements and alterations might be made.

By the third week in June, we had begun to speculate regarding the fate of the measure for Free or Assisted Education. The moneys had indeed been voted for the purposes of this measure, but the Bill had not been produced. Would there, we asked ourselves, be time to pass it during this Session, especially if some parts of it should be challenged? The principle was known to be accepted by the majority on both sides of the House.

But some, perhaps many, of its provisions, might excite controversy or contention. Again, the plan might be simple, or might be comparatively complex. In either of these cases we thought there would not be time; and then a financial difficulty would arise similar to that already described in 1890, namely, that of money having been voted for a purpose, and then the Bill, as the sanction of that purpose, failing to pass. Such a failure, after the announcements which had been made in the Budget, would inflict another injury on the Government. At length on the 22nd of June, Sir William Hart-Dyke moved the Second Reading of the Bill. Its main provision was the granting of ten shillings annually a head, on the average attendance of scholars in every elementary school that abolished its fees. The right was virtually accorded to every English parent of demanding elementary education for his child free of fee. There was no other provision of consequence, and thus the Bill was simplicity itself. This provision would prove suitable to the School Boards throughout the Kingdom, but would press hardly on the best class of Voluntary schools. It would, however, be very favourable to the poorer and humbler Voluntary schools, mostly belonging

to the Church of England throughout the country. We had feared that any such provision favouring these schools would be disputed by some sections at least of the Opposition. But it immediately appeared that the Opposition had accepted this, and therefore the passing of the Bill during this Session was assured.

When the Second Reading had been moved by the Minister of Education in an able and competent manner, Mr. Bartley, a Conservative Member for Islington, moved its rejection in a well-informed, forceful, consistent and manly speech. Thereupon a long debate ensued, creditable, indeed honourable, to the House of Commons, as proving the personal interest felt by almost every Member in the schools, scholars, teachers, and school-managers of his constituency. Few circumstances have been of happier augury for the future of the people than the educational debates in the several Sessions of this Parliament, as regards their tone, tenour and purport, quite apart from the particulars of any scheme or any reform that might be under discussion. The plan of this Bill was cordially welcomed by the whole Gladstonian Party, by the Liberal Unionists, and by some of the Conservatives, besides those

immediately connected with the Government. Some Conservatives, who had not especially busied themselves with Education and who were not as yet committed, would naturally be willing to follow their Leaders on this occasion. But with many of us Conservatives the case was far different. During the previous year we had spoken and voted against a clause regarding free education in the Scotch Local Government Bill, on the express ground that this principle might be extended to England the following year, when we should have to oppose it. In that division, which was against the Government, I was a Teller together with Mr. (afterwards Sir Henry) Howorth, and many typical Conservatives, some of them nearly related to Cabinet Ministers, were in our lobby. What we then foresaw was now happening, and the line of duty seemed clear for us to act again as we had acted before. Many of us were reluctant to vote against our own Government and Party, and we had several private meetings in a Committee-room upstairs. In my own case, I had at the Election in 1885 declared to the electors my opinion that parents should, so far as their means might permit, pay for the education of their children. That view was, I

thought, entertained by my Party at that time, and was, so far as I knew, still held by my constituents. I mention my own case because it must have been similar to that of others. So when Mr. Bartley affirmed his intention to proceed to a division against the Second Reading, I felt bound to go with him. Our companions would be few in number, as some of our fellow-thinkers would allow the Second Reading in the hope of improving the measure in detail, and some would abstain from voting. Nevertheless, scanty as our band might be, it was important that the House and the country should see that, when real need shall arise, there always are men who will not depart from what they have said or written, and will vote according to their declarations notwithstanding any arguments to the contrary. The Second Reading was carried by that sort of division which shows the mass of the House on one side, and a handful of opponents on the other. During the Committee stage we moved some amendments favourable to the Voluntary system, believing that the existing competition of the School Board with that system would be aggravated by this Bill. Then we had once more the very *élite* of the Conservative Party in our lobby. Several severe criticisms were

uttered from our Benches, and Mr. W. H. Smith said, in a short speech, that he had listened to these criticisms from his own followers with great pain. I little thought that this would be the last speech I should ever hear him make.

The promptitude with which the Bill had passed the House, between the 22nd of June and the 9th of July, was regarded as a legislative feat. This was largely due to the good will, forbearance and co-operation of the Opposition. The Minister in charge, Sir William Hart-Dyke, showed unfailing tact, good temper, and departmental knowledge, all which raised his repute and secured for him congratulations from all quarters of the House. Mr. W. H. Smith quite devoted himself to this measure, which he well understood, having sat in former days on the School Board for London. Never was his Parliamentary dexterity better evinced than in this affair, which proved to be the last effort of his public life.

In these days Mr. W. H. Smith was taken ill during a political gathering at Hatfield House, and did not return to his place among us, Mr. Goschen acting as our Leader *pro tempore*. This sorrowful event resuscitated the consultations among us

Members, and our Party outside the House, about the succession to the Leadership in case Mr. W. H. Smith should, to our regret, be forced by ill-health to retire. The provisional choice seemed unanimously to fall upon Mr. Arthur Balfour. He had commended himself to our heartiest regards, not only by his Irish administration, which was commonly and quite truly called splendid, but also by the debating readiness, the nervous eloquence, and the Parliamentary skill, with which he had piloted unwieldy and heavy-laden measures through the shoals, reefs and straits of obstructive opposition. Further, by the charm of personal popularity he had held together his following, both inside and outside the House. Never had his ability been better displayed than in the several stages of the Land Purchase Bill during this last Session, of which he was the hero. Within two years there must be a General Election, and during that we should need a standard-bearer. For that position he was peculiarly fitted by his commanding figure and his genial, though intellectual and cultured, aspect. He was indeed the nephew of the Prime Minister in the Lords, but there need be no question of nepotism here, for he would be acclaimed Leader by the con-

current voices of all who were to be his followers and supporters both inside and outside Parliament.

About this time Mr. Balfour, at a political meeting outside the House, uttered a statement which made us listen *arrectis auribus*. Alluding to the Register to be made upon the 1st of August (1891), he predicted that upon this Register the next General Election would be fought.

The Government were now resolved to terminate the Session during the first week in August, partly in order to keep as near as possible to the principle urged by Sir George Trevelyan some little time previously and accepted by them, that Parliament should rise at the end of July. Seeing this, the Nationalists, *more suo*, tried to urge grievances in hope of extorting concessions. During that week Mr. John Redmond (a Parnellite) pleaded for the release of the dynamitard convicts now prisoners in England—Daly, Egan, and others. He was for some time in America and had but recently returned; since his return he proved himself one of the best speakers in the House. He had obtained interviews with the prisoners and professed to have fresh information. The Home Secretary, Mr. Matthews, had already refused to entertain this pro-

posal, as these dynamitard attempts were some of the very gravest cases in the annals of crime. Sir William Harcourt now came forward honourably to support this refusal with a statesmanlike and judicious speech. Late in the afternoon Mr. Parnell came in to sustain the proposal. Perceiving his section of the Nationalists to be beaten by the priesthood in Ireland, finding also the flow of dollars from America to be checked, he had placed himself at the disposal of the extreme party in America, the Clan-na-Gael, and the physical-force men. This was the last time I ever heard him address the House, for he died in the following autumn.

Like as the previous Session had been lighted up towards its close by successes in Imperial policy, so this Session was brightened by events affecting our Colonial interests in North America. The seal catching in the Northern Pacific had given rise to dangerous disputes between the men of British Columbia on the one hand and of the United States on the other. There was apprehension lest the trouble should extend to the fisheries at large in some at least of those waters. The critical nature of the question caused anxiety to all well-wishers of the mutual understanding between the two branches of

the Anglo-Saxon race. Nowhere was the relief more gladly felt than in the House of Commons, when at length we knew that the matter had been submitted to arbitration, with a reference of which the general terms would be satisfactory to British opinion. In Newfoundland the treaty-rights of the French to fishing there had caused trouble with the Colonists, and even with the Colonial Legislature. The Colony, however, by patriotic forbearance, enabled the mother country to prolong the *modus vivendi* with France on such conditions as might lead to a peaceful solution.

The week ending the 1st of August was, for us Private Members, one of the very worst during this Parliament. We had to hurry and scramble through Supply. Time was often wasted over petty votes, while some more important votes ran through helter skelter, and while some votes even went off without a word. We had four all-night sittings, going home to bed in the broadest daylight. We had a protracted sitting after the usual hours on Wednesday night and a long sitting on Saturday, the House being counted out at last from sheer inanition, as Members had gone away tired.

On Monday, the 4th, the congregation at Prayers

was like the two or three gathered together, for it consisted of the Speaker, the Chaplain, the Serjeant-at-Arms and five Members. The Appropriation Bill having been carried through its stages, Parliament was prorogued on the 5th.

During the ensuing Recess we learned with sorrow that the sickness of Mr. W. H. Smith, already mentioned, had proved mortal. He had during the summer been appointed by the Sovereign to the office of Warden of the Cinque Ports, as the guerdon of a long and honoured career in the service of the nation. He now retired to his new abode in Walmer Castle and died there, lamented almost as much by his opponents as by his immediate associates and his loyal followers.

I may conclude this chapter by referring to my own movements, as they may serve to illustrate the Life in Parliament. In common with many of my comrades I had, ever since May, been suffering from the influenza which visited the House of Commons. I had nevertheless attended every division, besides serving on several difficult committees. According to the ideas then prevailing in agricultural constituencies like mine, I was to proceed to Worcestershire after the breaking up of Parliament

early in August, and there to begin an electioneering campaign from village to village throughout an extensive area, demanding much labour, in preparation for the General Election which all men expected in the next year. Being unable from illness to undertake that exertion, I was obliged to intimate to my constituents that I should not seek re-election at their hands in the coming Election, thanking them heartily for all their past support and entreating them to name my successor, which they were good enough to do. Sir Edmund Lechmere, a Worcestershire Member, came forward with much public spirit to fill my place, at some trouble and sacrifice to himself. Late in the autumn, I so far recovered as to be able to accept the generous invitation from the electors of the Kingston Division of Surrey, as their popular Member, Sir John Whittaker Ellis, had intimated to his friends and constituents that he should not seek re-election. This Division, being limited in area and densely populated, would require much less labour in campaigning. Thus, while continuing to represent Worcestershire, my thoughts were necessarily turned towards Surrey for the short remainder of this Parliament.

CHAPTER X.

FIRST SESSION OF 1892.

Meeting of Parliament, February 9th—Mr. Balfour appointed Leader in the Commons—Debate on the Address concluded, February 16th—Introduction of Local Government Bill for Ireland, February 18th—Agricultural Small Holdings Bill, March 22nd—The Budget, April 11th—Second Reading of Local Government Bill by large majority—Announcement on June 13th of coming Dissolution—Agricultural Small Holdings Bill read a third time, May 27th—Winding-up of Supply business for the Session—Dissolution of Parliament, June 29th.

I AM now approaching the close of our political drama, and entering on the last Session of this Parliament. The reassembling was fixed for Tuesday the 9th of February (1892). We all knew that, according to the announcements of the previous year, the uppermost measure would be that for Local Government in Ireland. But—were the Ministers really confident of their power to carry this measure? On the one hand, they had heretofore shown themselves to be men of determination respecting their several programmes of the past six years. Having officially declared their intention respecting Local Government for Ireland, they would evince

the same persistency and energy as in the case of England, including Wales, and Scotland. The case of Ireland would, indeed, necessitate dogged contention; but that was the very quality which they had ever displayed, to our admiration. So, perhaps they might be able to fight this matter out to its successful end, as they had done in many other measures at least as hard as this. On the other hand, the longer heads among us thought differently regarding the actual power of the Government in this important affair. During the former contests the Ministers always had time on their side, which is a dominant factor in Parliamentary tactics. Now, alas, they had it against them. The present year (1892) was the sixth of the present Parliament, and the last but one of the legal term.

There was the speech (as already mentioned) whereby Mr. Balfour had predicted that the electoral register taking effect from 1st January, 1892, would be the one on which the next General Election must be fought. Could the Ministry pass such a thorny and contentious measure as that of Local Government for Ireland, in the last year of such a Parliament as this? When Private Members apprehend that they are soon to be dis-

solved, a change comes over the spirit of their Parliamentary dreams. Those who are not intending to seek re-election regard themselves as *functi officio*, and look forward to what they consider their well-earned repose. Those who are going to stand again for election begin to busy themselves more than ever with their constituencies. Their thoughts, no longer concentrated in Westminster, are wandering far astray among rural or urban coteries, meetings and gatherings, half social half political. Thus, of the two sets, those who are giving up and those who are going on, from neither can the Government of the day expect that unremitting and assiduous attention which is necessary for the passing of protracted and contested Bills. When this consideration, familiar to all Parliamentarians, came to be applied to this coming Session, we could hardly believe that the Ministers had a sure hope of carrying their scheme of Local Government for Ireland. They had courageously set up this formidable fence, just as such obstacles are erected on the course of a steeplechase; but did they confidently expect to clear it? They might walk up to it, and, in hunting phrase, rise in their stirrups, and crane their necks to look

over it. But that they could really ride with such an impetus as to jump over it, was more than many of us were able to believe. Had the Session of 1890 not been interrupted, then the year 1891 would have been free for the Irish Local Government scheme, according to what, as we assumed, must have been the original intention of the Ministers. Had this scheme been introduced during that year, 1891—the penultimate year of the Parliament—it would have been carried, for our men must have evinced the same loyal perseverance as in former years. They had, after that Session, yet another year, at least, of service to anticipate, and, for all they knew, nearly two years, perhaps. Therefore they must have stood to their guns, and the thing would have been accomplished. But that opportunity was the last, and it had been lost.

This view was confirmed by the fact that after a long Recess, beginning so early as the first week in August, 1891, the re-assembling was arranged for February the 9th, 1892. If a Bill of first-rate magnitude was to be passed on the eve of a dissolution, a somewhat earlier date than this might have been taken. Further, it was understood that a Bill for facilitating the creation of small holdings and likely

to be popular in some agricultural districts, was to have the foremost place in the Session, that is to say, was to be passed first of all, perhaps before Easter. Then we felt sure that the Government were introducing Local Government for Ireland, for the sake of honourable consistency, in order, also, to show their hand, and to do what might be possible under adverse circumstances, but without any certainty of succeeding.

So the Session of 1892, the seventh of the present Parliament, was opened. On this, the last occasion of re-assembling for the men who had fought countless fights of logomachy with infinite physical and mental endurance, I was struck more than ever by the "*camaraderie*" which gradually grows up even among political opponents — just as schoolboys remember the old skirmishing at school without animosity, but rather with friendliness. They would meet as if they looked back upon the passages wherein they had crossed swords with amused remembrance indeed, but without any tinge of bitterness.

When we settled down for the debate on the Address, in response to the Queen's Speech, several changes in the *personnel* were noticeable. Mr.

Arthur Balfour had been appointed First Lord of the Treasury in succession to Mr. W. H. Smith, whose death the whole House of Commons deplored. With the acclamation of his Party outside, he now took his seat on the Treasury Bench as Leader of the House amidst the cheers of his followers in the House. Lord Hartington had been elevated to the Lords on the death of his father, the Duke of Devonshire, and was succeeded by Mr. Joseph Chamberlain as Leader of the Liberal Unionists. Sir James Fergusson (Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs) had been appointed Postmaster General in succession to Mr. Cecil Raikes, deceased, and was himself succeeded by Mr. J. W. Lowther. Mr. Jackson, the Secretary to the Treasury, had been appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland, being succeeded by Sir John Gorst, Under Secretary of State for India, whose place in the India Office was filled by Mr. George Curzon.

When a copy of the Queen's Speech, already delivered in the Lords, was read to us by the Speaker, the pathetic passage regarding the recent demise of His Royal Highness the Duke of Clarence, was impressively and solemnly delivered.

All the Members sat during the reading with their heads uncovered in token of respect, and we wore Court mourning.

The Address was moved by Mr. Herman Hodge in yeomanry uniform, with most sympathetic allusions to the demise of the Duke of Clarence; and was seconded by Mr. Milvain in Court dress. Then in Mr. Gladstone's absence, Sir William Harcourt rose to speak for the Opposition. He re-echoed the expressions of condolence and sympathy respecting the demise of the Duke of Clarence. He alluded in terms of generous commendation to the late Mr. W. H. Smith. So far his language was excellent and his tone solemn. But turning to practical politics, he sharply attacked Mr. Goschen about the proposed one pound notes and the currency. Mr. Balfour then rose to make his maiden speech as Leader, reiterating the expressions of condolence with the Royal Family. He also alluded in fitting terms to the memory of his lamented predecessor.

There was some skirmishing till the 12th, when Mr. Chamberlain rose to make his first speech as Leader of the Liberal Unionists. He stood forth in full fighting trim, and evinced uncompromising antagonism to the Gladstonian policy, as illustrated

by the extra-parliamentary speeches during the last autumn. He animadverted on the ambiguous and changeful deliverances on Home Rule, which might mean nothing, or else anything from County Government up to Nationalist independence. He challenged Mr. Gladstone to specify which of these diverse or conflicting plans was to be adopted, if a Gladstonian Ministry should be formed in the coming Parliament. He rated both Mr. Gladstone and Mr. John Morley roundly for having indirectly held out hopes to the French regarding the evacuation of Egypt, the fulfilment of which hopes must, in the present state of British opinion, be indefinitely deferred. Mr. John Morley in his reply, as we thought, whittled away or minimized his utterances about Egypt. As to Home Rule for Ireland, he implied that at the General Election the electors at large should decide for or against the principle in the abstract, and that if they decided for it, then Mr. Gladstone should be trusted to fill in the details.

We were curious to see what would become of the Parnellite section of the Nationalists, now that Mr. Parnell was dead. Will it survive, we asked ourselves, and if it does, who will be its leader? Its

survival was immediately manifest, but its leadership was never notified. Its intention, apparently, was to insist on Home Rule to the logical extremity, whereas the Anti-Parnellites would accept as much of the Home Rule as Mr. Gladstone might concede by instalments. We perceived, however, that Mr. John Redmond (the elder of the two brothers), was the *de facto* Parnellite leader. He vainly pleaded for the release of the dynamitard prisoners. But the Government resisted the proposal, again with Sir William Harcourt's honourable and judicious support. Further, with heart-searching queries, he pressed Mr. Gladstone to declare a Home Rule policy, in sufficient detail to warn its foes and encourage its friends. He frankly avowed his fear that a vacillating and veering policy would be followed by Mr. Gladstone in this respect.

Mr. Sexton seemed now to be the Parliamentary leader, while Mr. Justin M'Carthy was the titular head and Mr. Timothy Healy the fighting chief, of the Anti-Parnellite section. Thus it devolved on Mr. Sexton to move a Resolution in favour of Home Rule as an Amendment to the Address. The debate dragged on till near midnight, when closure was moved by a Gladstonian—the Oppo-

sition actually applying the process to themselves ! This counter-stroke had, of course, a sinister reason. The Opposition had found out that our men were not up to time, having gone home to dinner and not having yet returned. The night was most inclement, the snow was falling fast on the ice-bound earth, the roads were hard to traverse. We thought we had not men enough in attendance. As we entered the division-lobby for a question on which the Government must resign if beaten—I trembled for the Unionist cause ! We actually won, however, by the narrow majority of 21. Seeing that, the Opposition allowed the Address to be voted without further ado on the 16th.

Our men had so far rallied by the 18th, that the House was quite crowded when Mr. Balfour rose to introduce, with an elaborate speech, his long-promised Bill for Local Government in Ireland, in principle similar to, though not identical in detail with, the Local Government Acts for England and Scotland. His speeches on these occasions were always excellent, but in this speech there was not that hearty ring, that victorious tone, which had usually been noticeable. He hardly seemed to do justice to his own Bill, in terms descriptive of

its magnitude. He must have felt it to be as important as it really was, though he doubtless knew also that many of his followers thought otherwise. Notably he proposed stringent provisions to guard against tyrannical administration directed against particular classes or groups of persons. To enforce these he laid down a procedure and a tribunal. No sooner had he sat down than I perceived that some at least, and perhaps even many, of our men criticized the stringency of this procedure, which soon began to bear the name of "the put-them-in-the-dock clauses." On the other hand, they would have complained still more if the proposed County Councils had been left without any practical restraint. Indeed, I had often heard predictions of defective or futile control as being a permanent danger. These utterances, more or less contradictory, on our own side, made me think that our Party, though loyally unwilling to hold back from the promises that had been made regarding Local Government in Ireland, yet in its heart dreaded the measure. We felt that our Ulster friends, on the one hand, must insist on provisions being introduced for their own protection; that on the other hand the Nationalists

would offer to such provisions a resistance too stout to be overcome towards the end of a Parliament. Such proved, indeed, to be the case; the Ulstermen seemed to be fairly well content, but the Nationalists would resist to the end. Mr. John Morley's speech showed that he and his would accept nothing that did not throw the reins on the neck of the Nationalist Party, to run rough-shod over the propertied classes. Mr. Justin M'Carthy, on behalf of the Anti-Parnellites, and Mr. John Redmond, on behalf of the Parnellites, hastened, with very scant gratitude, to denounce a Bill which proposed great concessions respecting self-government. Mr. Labouchere sarcastically advised the Government to dissolve Parliament on this issue. As usual, Mr. Chamberlain gave us loyal and effective support, and so did Mr. Courtney. The Bill was read a first time that evening, and Mr. Balfour brought it up from the Bar to the Table just before midnight, amidst our cheers.

On Monday the 22nd of February the second step in the business of the Session was taken, when Mr. Chaplin, as Minister of Agriculture, rose to introduce his Bill for Agricultural Small Holdings, with all the ripe knowledge and the practical

competence which he might be expected to display. Frankly he had to admit some change in his sentiments, for he was proposing to create these holdings by loans to be lent by the County Councils to approved applicants on the security of the rates. A boon, similar in principle but different in detail, had been already conferred on the farm-labourers in the shape of allotments. Something was now to be attempted for the class between the labourers and the farmers, which class used, in recent centuries, to be called the yeomanry. Despite the experience which showed that the old yeomanry had disappeared because the yeomen disposed of their holdings, an effort was to be made for artificially resuscitating this most useful class. We might all desire the revival, though we could not help doubting whether it would be ever in the power of Parliament to permanently create such a class by financial stimulus. The extension of the suffrage in rural localities had induced all political Parties to pay increased attention to the subordinate interests concerned in the land. Mr. Jesse Collings rose to bless the measure, and he had a right to do so, having recommended these things before they became matters of competition between rival Parties.

It was an edifying sight to see the Bill read a first time amidst the mutual felicitations of the Ministerialists and the Opposition. The Second Reading took place on the 25th of March without a division. Mr. Gladstone made a speech dilating on the advantages of peasant proprietorship and of farming on small tenures on the Continent of Europe, in contrast with the British system. He further recommended the compulsory taking of land for these holdings. This proposal was, however, successfully resisted by the Government, on the unimpeachable ground that there is a superabundance of land available for private arrangements. On the 4th of April the Bill entered on the Committee stage, but made slight progress only before Easter.

Meanwhile progress had been made in Supply with the Army Votes. Mr. Hanbury, on our side, had produced a heavy indictment against the system of recruiting for, and service in, the Army. Being a tall, powerful man, with a sonorous voice, well equipped too with knowledge, statistical and other, he was a formidable assailant. He derived ample *pabulum* from the Departmental Report on recruiting in a previous year, and Lord Wantage's Commission in the present year on the same subject. In reply,

our War Minister, Mr. Edward Stanhope, made one of the best ministerial speeches heard during this Parliament, arguing that, after allowing for all admitted defects, we could produce more soldiers of good quality now than at any previous epoch in our military history.

At that time a Vote was taken for £20,000 for the survey of a railway from Mombassa, on the East Coast of Africa near Zanzibar, to the Lake Victoria Nyanza. This gave rise to a debate, in which Mr. Gladstone and Sir William Harcourt played a very hostile part. For us it was indeed painful to witness so venerable a statesman as Mr. Gladstone actually fanning all the flame of his eloquence in order to deprecate a project of material beneficence essential for maintaining our sphere of civilizing influence in Eastern Africa.

During the latter part of February, and generally throughout March, the course of our affairs seemed to be lagging, and to be somewhat tending in the direction desired by our opponents. On one occasion, the 27th of February, for two hours or so, the Government were in danger of a petty defeat on a small question about rural schoolrooms which was averted by some of us prolonging the debate till our

men came up. On the 17th and the 18th of March, when the usual Vote on Account for Civil Services came to be proposed, Mr. Labouchere, with mock gravity, moved that this Vote should not be passed till the Government declared the date of the dissolution! He essayed to speak, but our men drowned his voice by clamour. Being a man of fortitude and endurance, he lashed out against his persecutors, but in vain. It was all dumb show, and we could only watch with wonder his indignant gesticulation. When he sat down exhausted, Mr. Balfour rose, and silence instantly reigned in the Chamber. Of course, the Leader could do nothing except intimate in the politest terms that nothing could be said, because nothing was known by him, about dissolution, and that the Government would persevere in the work of the Session.

The latter part of March is always a critical time, and soon murmurings arose in our ranks. Some men began to think that Mr. Balfour was not sufficiently sharp and positive—the very last defect that had been expected of him—and that he was letting the boat of the Session glide idly over the waters leading to the rapids and the cascade of dissolution.

Evidently, however, he was only feeling his way, and soon he made declarations that reassured his followers.

In these days, we began inside the House to hear of a manifesto which had been long discussed outside, namely, the Newcastle Programme, and of some among the items comprised in it. On the 26th of March, the Payment of Members, that is allowing a salary to every Member, as a matter of course, was proposed as an abstract Resolution, and defeated by a large majority after a powerful speech from Mr. Balfour, which added something even to his high reputation. The attack on the proposal by Lord Elcho was a masterpiece of Parliamentary humour, satire, and sarcasm. The best speech in its favour was made by Sir Edward Grey, the scion of a very distinguished race, and one of the most interesting personalities in the Gladstonian ranks. How this proposal could be advocated by him passed our understanding. A Private Member's Bill from the Gladstonian side for the compulsory day of eight hours in mines was brought forward about this time, and after a debate of great ability on both sides, was thrown out by a large majority. We Conservatives voted against it, and our Tellers were two

Labour Members representing northern miners. What a whirligig of time this was, when these gentlemen watched the Conservatives filing through the division lobby!

A moderate Bill was brought in by the Government for developing the several Legislative Councils of India by the admission of Natives more largely, with some recognition of the elective principle. This was supported by Mr. Gladstone in a broad-minded and judicious manner. Some Members tried to enlarge it in a Radical direction, but he wisely deprecated that.

Yet one more despairing effort before this Parliament should close, was made by the Parnellites and Anti-Parnellites in combination on behalf of the so-called evicted tenants, who ought to be called self-evicted. These were the men, who in 1887 and 1888 had chosen to leave their tenancies under the Plan of Campaign, and were for a while sustained by the Campaign Chest that was filled with rent-moneys really due to the landowners. Under Mr. Balfour's administration the Plan failed, and the chest became depleted. The New Tipperary, founded near the real Tipperary, in connection with this movement, had collapsed, and was mercilessly

satirized by Colonel Saunderson. The split in the Nationalist camp, after the fall of Mr. Parnell, affected the influx of dollars from America. So these self-evicted tenants were left without support. Mr. Dillon was understood to be specially responsible for their sustenance, as having been chiefly instrumental in leading them on that course. On the 30th of March, a bold proposal was made for amending the Land Purchase Act passed only last Session, in order to compel the landowners to sell the tenancies to their tenants. This was, of course, decisively defeated, and during the debate the exposure of the Plan of Campaign and its consequences by Mr. T. W. Russell was like an electric search-light !

On the 7th of April a matter arose respecting the Privileges of the House, a theme which always excites the just jealousy of Members. The Directors of one of the Railway Companies had discharged one of their servants. Their opponents connected this proceeding with his having given certain evidence before a Parliamentary Committee. Some of the Radical Members pressed the points against the Directors in a manner which seemed to us the reverse of judicial. Certainly I was not favourably

impressed by the conduct of the House on this occasion. The Directors were called to the Bar of the House, and there received the admonition of the Speaker, which was indeed couched in dignified and befitting terms.

On the 11th of April, Monday in Passion Week, Mr. Goschen produced his Budget with a masterly review of his financial administration of six years. But he had to take things as they were; indeed the beneficent achievements of previous years had left him without the means for further efforts.

The next day, Tuesday, we met virtually to settle the adjournment for the Easter Recess. Thus we parted for a brief while, having accomplished in this Session less work before Easter than in the corresponding period of any previous Session. The cause was obviously this, that the Ministerial policy had become somewhat out of joint, that some disintegration of party discipline was setting in, and that consequently the Ministers had not the *verve* to prosecute the work of the Session with the success of former days.

On Monday, the 26th of April, we re-assembled in scanty numbers after the Easter Recess. The Prayers were read by our Chaplain to a mere

handful of Members. There was a special cause for this, namely, the pre-occupation of Members in their constituencies with a view to a possible dissolution. From some extra-Parliamentary utterances it had been inferred by some that after all there would be no dissolution during this year. But we who sat immediately behind the Ministers felt sure that the dissolution must take place, because affairs were not being conducted with that motive power which in former years used to be like a steel spring, giving an impulse to govern the unruly wills of friend and foe.

The first business of consequence after Easter was the Clergy Discipline (Immorality) Bill, for dealing with cases which, though very rare, will yet occasionally occur in a large body numbering some 40,000 clerks in Holy Orders. But whenever they do occur, the mischief to the congregation is ineffable. Nevertheless, this simple Bill, necessary for the due management of the Church, was quite desperately resisted by a small band of Welsh Nonconformist Members. This resistance of theirs laid them open to the imputation of refusing aid to the Church in reforming herself, without due heed to the existence of faults which might hereafter be urged

as reasons for dis-establishing her. During the debate we noticed Mr. Gladstone engaging in some earnest conversation with Sir William Harcourt and with Mr. Fowler, who is an eminent Wesleyan. The cause was immediately apparent, for Mr. Gladstone rose to make one of his truly admirable speeches. He advocated the Bill in terms of noble generosity towards the organization of the Church, and yet in language of courteous respect towards the Nonconformists. Low murmurs of approbation rose from our Benches during the delivery of this speech, and at its close the Chamber rang and re-echoed with Conservative cheers. In the division the Churchmen were supported by the English Nonconformists, and the Welsh Members were left in an insignificant minority. The Bill was then referred to the Grand or Standing Committee on Law. There the Welsh Members urged destructive amendments in scores. Mr. Gladstone himself—despite his avocations and his age—attended honourably to support the churchmen against a knot of his own recalcitrant followers. The Welsh Members, however, persevered, informing us that they were receiving telegrams from large meetings of their constituents thanking them for the

noble stand they were making! We had never seen a stronger instance of the intenseness of party spirit. At length we appealed to the Chairman, Mr. Campbell-Bannerman, and he managed to bring these proceedings to an end. But when the Bill reached the House on the Report stage the same Welsh Members reproduced the same amendments, covering pages and pages of print. For some hours the House allowed each amendment to be briefly argued and settled, though the process was slow. As the night wore on, an appeal was made to the Speaker, who pronounced that the process was unprecedented. Then closure began to be applied to each amendment, the divisions being so numerous that we were kept almost continuously walking through the division lobbies, till at last the Bill was passed in the small hours of the morning, the midnight rule having been suspended.

On Wednesday, the 28th of April, Sir Albert Rollit moved the Second Reading of a Bill to confer the Parliamentary franchise on duly qualified women. He discharged his task with remarkable ability, tact and skill. Never has that cause been better advocated than by him. He was supported by Mr. Woodall and Mr. Courtney, the best friends of this

interesting movement. The debate disclosed much of warm support but also much of insuperable opposition, Mr. Gladstone being included among the opponents. It was defeated in the division by a narrow majority.

On the 29th of April Mr. Balfour moved to take up a part of the time of the House. We quite understood that the Opposition wished the dissolution to take place upon a spoilt Session and then to make capital out of that in the Elections. Mr. Balfour gave spirited expression to this sentiment, and told them to their faces that they wished to wreck the Session. As to the Irish Local Government Bill, he would bring that forward in the middle of May when the attendance of Members was likely to be at its height, and when the fittest opportunity would be afforded of deciding the main controversy of the Session.

For the 9th of May a Nationalist motion had been set down, with the evident intention of inducing Mr. Gladstone to declare how far he would go in rendering a Home Rule legislature and administration independent of Great Britain. Our men had promised themselves some mirthful sport in watching his delicate distresses under this interpel-

lation! But the Nationalist was wise in his generation, and refrained.

Then the Committee stage of the Agricultural Small Holdings Bill was completed on the 17th of May; the Report and the Third Reading were both passed on the 27th. We were all proud to observe the unrivalled knowledge of landed concerns displayed during this stage by Mr. Chaplin as Minister of Agriculture.

At length, on the 19th of May, the Bill for Local Government in Ireland was brought forward for Second Reading, when Mr. Sexton rose to move its rejection. He thundered forth that this Bill was, in general terms, an insult to Ireland. He then divided this into specific headings, and set forth eleven insults in detail, making up the grand total of insult. The performance, though quite seriously meant, seemed serio-comic to us, and we listened with amusement. During the debate Mr. Dunbar Barton, a new Member for Ulster, took up each of the eleven insults, categorically disposing of them one by one. Mr. Jackson, the new Chief Secretary for Ireland, made a powerful speech, bristling with effective statistics. On the 24th the Second Reading was carried by a good majority of

ninety-two, decidedly more than our normal majority. The fact was that our men had come up well for the nonce to strike the last blow for the Government, with the inward assurance that after this they would hear no more of the Bill. Again, some Nationalists did not care to cross over from Ireland to vote against a Bill which they were sure would not be pressed on any further. Some zealous politicians even surmised that, after this auspicious manifestation, the Government would take the Bill into Committee and pass it before the Session ended. This was indeed quite practicable if the Unionist Party could be kept together in the House till the end of August. But, alas! this could not be, for the Members had among themselves already decided otherwise. As the General Election must come sooner or later, they had resolved to have it sooner.

In the Select Committee (already mentioned) on the Superannuation of Teachers, of which I was the Chairman, so convinced were we regarding the approach of dissolution, that we pressed on the completion of our Report. This was effected with the help of Sir Richard Paget and Mr. Arthur Acland. I was thankful to find myself

standing at the Bar and, at the Speaker's call, advancing towards the Table, making the prescribed bow, and presenting this elaborate document.

On the 30th of May a Vote on Account for the Civil Services had to be obtained, and for that purpose the midnight Rule was suspended. The Nationalists wished to show their power of holding the Vote (in their own phrase), probably with some reference to the Local Government Bill.

In the last days of May we found that anxious enquiries on the Radical side were met by the Opposition Leaders with a reticence that had suddenly set in. Thence we inferred that there was some understanding arrived at between them and our Front-bench as to the completion of Supply and other business after Whitsuntide, with a view to a dissolution in the early summer.

On the afternoon of Friday the 3rd of June, we were to adjourn for the Whitsuntide Recess. Mr. Balfour adroitly moved the adjournment so as to shut out all Private Members' Bills that might be on the Notice Paper. He was not personally answerable for this, but it afforded a crowning instance of the ruthlessness with which every

Government will treat the work of Private Members, even among the nearest of their own supporters as well as those on the Opposition side. Each Ministry in succession will do this with impunity, because on neither side are the Private Members agreed among themselves in these matters.

We re-assembled on Thursday the 9th of June, after the Whitsuntide Recess, for what we all felt must be our last *réunion* for this Parliament. The attendance was again very scanty, and I counted just one dozen Members present when our Chaplain began to read the Prayers. Mr. Balfour said that on Monday, the 13th, he would make a statement regarding the public business for the Session. We met on that day to hear the announcement of our fate. Still we cheered lustily when Mr. Balfour rose to make his statement amidst the silence of the Opposition, to show that we were not afraid, when we thought of all that had been done by us for the British electors at large, though we felt in our hearts that the popular favour does not follow on proved achievements. He spoke with the air of a Minister who has annually to make a statement of this sort after Whitsuntide. He alluded to the measures which the Government

would have to drop—the Bill for Local Government in Ireland, the District Councils Bill for England, the Private Bills Procedure Bill for Scotland, the Employers' Liability Bill, and some other measures. He still hoped to see passed the Irish Education Bill and the Scotch Burgh and Police Bill and some lesser Bills. During this speech, which was delivered in the most matter-of-fact way, perhaps even with studied nonchalance, he once spoke of the premature closing of the Session. This was the first hint of dissolution that had escaped him. In his closing sentence he just alluded to a dissolution, but never announced it, as if it had been already settled virtually by common consent. As he sat down he was greeted with cheers by many of our men as if they welcomed dissolution, those especially who did not wish to see the Bill for Local Government in Ireland pass into law, who held fairly safe seats, who had ready all their arrangements for the Election, and who could not endure a prolongation of suspense. We remarked that the Opposition cheered but very little.

The consequence was instantly apparent within the Chamber. Some Scotch legislation having been despatched with unwonted smoothness, the

Irish Votes in Supply were brought forward, and then the incredible came to pass. Mr. Sexton announced that, with a view to precipitate the General Election, his Party would let these Votes go unopposed. Thereon the thorny Votes for the Chief Secretary's Salary, the Royal Irish Constabulary, the Prisons, the Local Government Board, and so forth—Votes which in all previous Sessions had taken up days and days amidst the fiercest and bitterest invective—were passed in a few minutes, either *sub silentio*, or with the very slenderest questioning. We wondered what was the prime mover in this matter, for it could not apparently be Irish, and must be British. The attitude of Sir William Harcourt soon supplied the reason. He and his henchmen desired so to expedite the business of the moribund Session that the dissolution should take place on Thursday the 23rd or Friday the 24th instead of Monday the 27th, or some later day. The object in all this was to bring on the Election within the Metropolitan area for Saturday the 2nd of July, which could not be managed if the dissolution should fail to come off till after the Monday. The motive was apparently in this wise. Saturday is

a convenient day on which working men may record their votes, but so are all days in the evening, at which hour the electors of this class usually attend at the polling-booths. On the other hand, Saturday is peculiarly inconvenient for small shopkeepers and costermongers, who are supposed to be largely Conservative. The tactical motive of the Opposition Leaders, then, seemed clear enough to us; and the keenness of Parties on the eve of a general contest was but natural. This conclusion, too, was inferrible from speeches of Mr. Labouchere, who was always the frankest of opponents. Mr. Balfour, however, explained that in order to obtain the concurrence of the Lords in various Bills, and other proceedings which had to pass through the Upper House, he could not propose any date for the dissolution before the Monday or Tuesday.

On the 17th the number of Members at Prayers had dwindled to half a dozen. The Scotch and Irish Bills above mentioned were passed. The share belonging to Ireland out of the two millions voted last year for the United Kingdom, was appropriated in lieu of the remission of fees. The Education Vote for England was prefaced by a

statement from the Minister, but the discussion was cut short. The Indian Budget was brought forward according to law. On Monday the 27th the good and great Parliament elected in 1886 met for the last time, and adjourned till the 29th for the formal closing of the Session.

CHAPTER XI.

SECOND SESSION OF 1892.

General Election of 1892—Meeting of New Parliament, August 4th—Conservative Government still in office—Re-election of Mr. Peel as Speaker—Debate on the Address begins on Mr. Asquith's amendment to the Address—Speeches by Nationalist Members—Mr. Gladstone's reply—Speeches by Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain—The amendment carried after a full division and the Conservative Government defeated, August 11th—Prorogation of Parliament.

THE General Election in the summer of 1892 had resulted in a majority of about forty for the several Gladstonian sections in combination over the Unionist Party. I entered the new Parliament as Member for the Kingston Division of Surrey. As compared with the beginning of the last Parliament, the Conservative strength had fallen from 303 to 267, that of the Liberal Unionists from 66 to 47; while that of the Gladstonians, including Radicals of all shades, and Labour Members, had risen from 214 to 272. The Nationalists remained at much the same strength as before, less four or five. They consisted chiefly of Anti-Parnellites, who had contested the con-

stituencies with Parnellite candidates, and had generally been victorious at the polls, through the influence of the Roman Catholic priesthood. The Parnellites were now reduced to a little band of nine under the leadership of Mr. John Redmond.

The result was known before the end of July; and the meeting of the new Parliament had been fixed for the 4th of August. Lord Salisbury's Government might, if so minded, have resigned, and thereby allowed Mr. Gladstone to form a Cabinet and so to meet the new Parliament on its assembling. The Members of the Unionist Party were, however, anxious that the assembling should take place under the official leadership of their Chiefs. To this privilege they were entitled according to the old constitutional practice, though the opposite course could have been defended by some precedents. The effect of this would be that Mr. Gladstone would have to drive them from Office by a vote of the new House, which would be quite within his power. To accomplish this, however, he would have to propose a hostile motion of no confidence in the Unionist Government. To carry such a motion he must initiate a debate, in the course of which he would be obliged either to expose his policy to some

extent or to wrap it in ambiguity. In either case his position would be effectively assailed by Unionist orators. Nor would he be the only speaker on his side. Others must speak also, and the answering of their arguments would develop the Unionist position. The main object, doubtless, was to evoke some explanation of Gladstonian policy in respect to Home Rule for Ireland.

Accordingly, on Thursday, the 4th of August, when the new Parliament met, Lord Salisbury's Government was still in office. In the House of Commons the Treasury Bench was, therefore, occupied by the Conservative Ministers, and their followers sat on the right-hand side of the Chamber.

On that day I saw, for the third time in my life, a new Parliament meet. When we returned from the Lords to our own House to elect a Speaker, Sir Matthew White Ridley, by pre-arrangement, rose from our benches to propose the re-election of Mr. Arthur Peel as Speaker. This he did in a brief speech full of manly dignity. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gladstone, with all the skill as well as originality which he invariably evinces on occasions of this nature. Then Mr. Peel responded

from his place as a Liberal Unionist. He was sitting, not as he had heretofore sat at the beginning of a Parliament on the Liberal benches, but on our benches below the gangway.

The following day, Friday the 5th, at noon, we followed the Speaker Elect to the Bar of the Lords, where he announced his election with the usual formalities, and received the Queen's approbation thereto. Then we returned to our own House and the swearing in of the Members began, more expeditiously than on former occasions. The next day, Saturday, we resorted in numbers to the Terrace on a glorious summer's eve to discuss the situation.

On Monday, the 8th, the House met at 2 o'clock. We were summoned by Black Rod to the Bar of the Lords, and there heard the Royal Speech read by Lord Chancellor Halsbury for the last time. The Gracious Speech was brief, the impossibility was recognized of undertaking legislative work during the present Session, and we were recommended to continue during the next Session the same beneficent course of legislation which had been pursued during previous Sessions. At four o'clock that afternoon, the Address in response

was moved in our House by Mr. Dunbar Barton, of Ulster, and seconded by Mr. Cross, eldest son of Lord Cross, the Minister; both wearing Court dress. At 2 o'clock, the attendance at Prayers had been very large, and now the Chamber, Benches, and Galleries were crowded with Members. Then Mr. Asquith, according to notice, rose from the Bench immediately behind the Front Opposition Bench, to move his Resolution, as an Amendment to the Address, and therefore a formal Question of Confidence or No Confidence in the Government. It was as simple as possible, merely affirming that Her Majesty's Ministers had not the confidence of the majority in the new Parliament. He performed his task in the drastic, caustic, masterly manner, which experience in the last Parliament had taught us to expect from him. His being chosen by Mr. Gladstone for this occasion was significant, and our men said that he had received a brief on the back of which was inscribed "Office"—though they little thought how high an Office was destined for him. He spoke with undisguised disparagement of nearly all the legislation of the last Parliament under Lord Salisbury's Administration, and argued that there could be little or no real reform till his

Party should have a spell of power. He laboured to prove that the Gladstonian majority of 40 was due not only to Ireland, to Scotland, and to Wales, but partly also to a change of opinion in England herself. There was some reason, no doubt, in this argument ; still no pleading of his could overcome the fact that the majority in England for the Unionist Party was still so great as to over-balance the ' Scotch and Welsh elections, and to give a majority in Great Britain against Mr. Gladstone. He was seconded by Mr. Burt, originally a Labour Member, but one of Nature's Gentlemen, in a mild and amiable speech.

Then the full-dress debate was set agoing, first by Mr. Goschen, who pressed his attack on Mr. Gladstone with outstretched arm in a dramatic manner. Mr. Justin M'Carthy, for the Anti-Parnellites, expressed the demand for Home Rule in terms gentle and vague. But Mr. John Redmond, for the Parnellites, formulated it in terms as severe as they were explicit. Both Leaders repeated the old demands made in the last Parliament for the restoration of the self-evicted tenants and the release of the dynamitard prisoners. The next day, Tuesday the 9th, Mr. Gladstone rose to

make what was virtually his eloquent manifesto to a closely packed crowd of intent listeners. He gave written answers to all the points in Mr. Justin M'Carthy's speech. He excused himself from answering Mr. John Redmond's catechising speech on the strange ground that he had not heard the speech, apparently forgetting that he might, if so minded, have read verbatim reports of it in the newspapers! He declined to give any statement of his policy because his Government was not yet formed. The real reason was this, that he did not yet know what he might have to do or to postpone or to avoid, till he could settle matters with the competing, perhaps even the conflicting, sections of his varied following. This speech served only to thicken and darken the cloudy doubts that hung over his position. The pathetic passage was near the end when he declared that Home Rule for Ireland was now the sole link that bound him to public life, that he had unswervingly pursued this object for several years, and that so it would be to the end. Mr. Balfour at once replied with a stringent and trenchant speech. Among other memorable sayings he divided the Nationalists into two categories, first,

those who had been squared—meaning presumably the Anti-Parnellites,—second, those who had not been squared—meaning doubtless the Parnellites. By squared he must have meant reconciled. He painted the future of the Unionist Party in a style which our men considered to be persuasive and brilliant. This passage of rhetorical arms between him and Mr. Gladstone was spoken of at the moment as the duel of the giants. We adjourned that night over Wednesday until Thursday, when a third Parliamentary giant stood forth in the person of Mr. Chamberlain. He proceeded with a speech which more than answered the expectations which had been formed. The Galleries were all crowded, including the Peers' Gallery. Rows of chairs had been placed on the floor of the House, a sight which had not been witnessed since 1886. He analysed the discordant sections into which the Gladstonian Party divided itself. He contrasted the descriptions given of Home Rule in one place with those given in another, arguing that it was an ever changeful and unstable thing, facing various ways and with diverse aspects. He threw all his destructive energy into the peroration which elicited the rapturous applause of our men. That

evening the attendance at the dinner hour was greater than on any day within the memory of the oldest attendant in the House, and covers were laid for 500. After the dinner-hour Sir Henry James made one of his beautiful speeches, summarising the services rendered by the Unionist Party to the nation and eulogizing the political conduct of the Conservatives. Mr. Chaplin wound up the debate in what would have been a very effective speech if it could have been properly heard. But he was under a running fire of interruptions from the Nationalists. Here was an eminent English Member speaking on behalf of England on a constitutional question; they were on the very eve of their expected triumph and yet they would not allow him to be listened to! Just before midnight the Speaker rose to put the Question, it having been settled between the Parties that the division should take place that night. The hopes which some of us cherished—to the effect that differences within the Gladstonian and Nationalist Parties would be developed, and that splits or rifts between the several sections would become apparent—had been disappointed by the debate. It was clear that for the nonce they would all fall into line and combine to “electrocute”

the present Government, in the Irish - American phrase current among some of the Nationalists. The division was the fullest on record ; the Ayes for the vote of no confidence were 350, the Noes, that is the Unionists, were 310, leaving a majority of 40 for Mr. Gladstone. His majority was really 39, as the Speaker, who was returned as a Unionist, did not vote. Thus, with the four Tellers, 664 Members were present, out of 668 the total number of the actual Members, inasmuch as two seats were vacant out of the 670. Thus only four Members were absent from the division, and they were the Speaker as one, two sick in bed and one (a Nationalist) away in Australia. This great division was said at the time to be the fullest ever known. The four Whips, Mr. Arnold Morley and Mr. Marjoribanks for the Gladstonians, Mr. Akers Douglas and Sir William Walrond for the Conservatives and Unionists, were remarkably fine-looking men. As they faced the Table, the Whips of the winning side stood on the right. It was a sight as strange to our eyes, as it was melancholy, to see our two famous Whips standing, beaten at last, on the left. To us the natural order of things seemed to be inverted when at length they were dislodged from the right, where they had

stood evening after evening for several years, comprising many hundreds of victorious divisions. It was hard to realise that the end had come at last! As the forecast of the result had been made with nicety on both sides, there was, when the numbers were announced from the Chair, none of that wild delight that bursts forth when a triumph is declared, of which no man felt sure until the numbers had been given out. Some few cries from the Nationalist quarter, such as "Balfour out at last," were the only irregular exclamations that reached our ears. But there was much of disciplined enthusiasm on both sides. When Mr. Gladstone walked along the floor to his place, just after all his men had resumed their seats—perhaps by some concert—they all rose and waved their hats with cheering. After the announcement of the numbers there was a renewal of Gladstonian cheers. When these had subsided, Mr. Balfour moved the adjournment of the House, this being his last act as Leader. Then from the Benches behind him we all rose, waving our hats and continued our cheering for some time.

From the moment of that adjournment we Conservatives were released from attendance. Our Whips and our Ministers were no longer

answerable for the conduct of affairs during the remainder of this short Session. It was understood that Mr. Gladstone would be commanded by the Queen to form a Ministry, and would then summon the House to meet for some formal business before the prorogation of Parliament till the following year.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

Retrospect of past Parliaments, 1886 to 1892 inclusive—Numbers of divisions—The Marquess of Salisbury's Administration—Principal measures — General legislation — Finance — Imperial policy — Ministers and Private Members — Order and Self-discipline — Alliance between Conservatives and Liberal Unionists—Parliamentary characters of the leading Statesmen in the Commons.

My narrative, then, will stop here, in the latter half of 1892. It has embraced nine Parliamentary Sessions, and six years and a half since the beginning of 1886. Of this space the first half year belonged to the Parliament elected in 1885, and was mainly under Mr. Gladstone's Administration. All the remainder, or six years, belonged to the Parliament of 1886, and was under a Conservative Administration with a Liberal Unionist alliance. The Parliament elected in 1886, then, will here be called the late Parliament, as distinguished from the present Parliament, elected in 1892. In so far as statistics may afford some measure of our toil, it may be well to summarize the number of divisions in which I took part,

premising always that many of my companions did the same. During 1886, then, I was in 46 divisions out of a total possible of 46; during 1887, in 450 out of 485; during 1888, in 353 out of 357; during 1889, in 358 out of 360; during 1890, in 261 out of 262; during 1891, in 415 out of 415; during 1892, in 189 out of 193; and during the six years in 2072 out of 2118. Among my comrades General Goldsworthy attended about an equal number of divisions. During this time I never "paired" but once, and that was for a State function which I thought it behoved me to attend. Otherwise I attended every division in which I could possibly have been present. In rare instances I was disabled by sickness, or was obliged to be at the School Board for London. If, by hypothesis, an inquisition were made by my constituents, each division that I ever missed could be accounted for by some obligatory reason. And assuredly the same could be adduced for many of my companions. It must be remembered that a certain proportion out of the total number of divisions relates to Private Bills or Resolutions; and that in the divisions on Public Bills or Resolutions there are many degrees of importance.

Here, also, to my supreme regret, I part company with Lord Salisbury's Government, and with a long Administration distinguished by power, influence, and success. The result was largely due to the maintenance of the alliance with the Liberal Unionists.

There is no denying that for full six years this Government fought its way victoriously through the House of Commons, though confronted by an Opposition of wondrous resourcefulness and persistency—that it obtained the concurrence and the prompt co-operation of the House of Lords for all its measures—and that it carried out a national policy, as exemplified by the Acts for the better enforcement of the law in Ireland, for the improvement of the relations between the Irish landlords and their tenants, for the purchase of land by tenants in Ireland, for the County Government in England and Scotland, for the reform of the Scotch Universities, for the reduction of the interest on the National Debt. Further, its muster-roll of measures in the second rank was long and imposing—such measures as the regulation of mines, assisted or “free” education in elementary schools, technical instruction, the recovery of tithes,

the granting of Allotments for labourers, the creation of Small Holdings for yeomen, the constitution of an Agricultural Department, the improvement of the Factory laws, the regulation of railways and canals, intermediate education in Wales, land-purchase in Ireland, which, though infinitely difficult to pass, was comparatively limited in scope.

There were several Consolidation Acts, such as those for the Scotch Criminal Procedure, for the Scotch Police and Burghs, for the Statute Law Revision, for the Laws regarding the Public Health, for the Lunacy Laws.

The Acts (as distinguished from the Private Acts) for the six years were 428 in all, giving an average of 71 for each year. Some of these were formal, and had to be enacted almost as matters of course, or as consequential on other Acts; and they may be reckoned at one-fourth of the whole. There are also the measures in the first and second rank of importance. After the deduction of all these, there would remain no less than 250 of lesser Acts affecting beneficially almost all classes of the community—such as those relating to Artisans' Dwellings, to Savings Banks, to Trade Marks, to Weights and Measures, to Diseases of

Cattle, to Fisheries, to Museums and Gymnasiums. Some of these were due to the instrumentality and the exertions of Private Members.

Taking the legislation all in all, we may say that it touched almost every part of our national life in its many phases—life under ground, in the mines—life above ground, in the factories, in the market-places, in the alleys and courtyards—life on the farms, the fields, the allotment-gardens—life in the counting-house and the savings banks—life in the barracks and at sea, and in the bush beyond the sea—life everywhere and under all circumstances as lived by British people.

The foreign, colonial and imperial policy was eminently satisfactory to those foreign Powers who could reasonably be conciliated, and thus tended to preserve the peace. For Western Australia it confirmed the representative constitution, a measure of far-reaching consequence to nearly half the Australian Continent. For Australia as a whole it laid the foundation of a Colonial Navy. For Newfoundland it prevented the fishery dispute with the French from assuming an acute or critical form, and arranged a basis of future settlement. For the Canadian Dominion it procured a reference

to Arbitration respecting the dispute with the United States, in the North Pacific waters. It chartered a Corporation for South Africa. It demarcated the British sphere of influence in Eastern Africa in agreement with Germany, and in Western Africa in agreement with France. Thus, while making territorial arrangements on a vast scale, it strengthened existing ties with two European Powers. For Egypt it maintained an administration teeming with advantages to the native Egyptians. For India it secured a new eastern frontier in the upper valley of the Irawaddy, abutting on China; and added enormously to the defensive resources of the North-West frontier, adjoining Afghanistan. For imperial defence it completed the armament and fortification of the naval coaling stations right round the globe, afforded additional protection to the military ports nearer home, augmented the fighting superiority of the Navy, and reformed the military organization or mobilization within the United Kingdom.

The financial policy was guided by some of the best expert wisdom which the living generation could afford. It was favoured by some of that national prosperity which must ever be essential to finance.

But still there was ample scope for skill and firmness. The net diminution of taxation, the reduction of the interest on the national debt, the two successive remissions in the Income-tax, the appropriation of handsome sums annually of imperial money for the benefit of local authorities, the large grant from the Exchequer as compensation for the relinquishment of fees in Elementary schools, the special sums devoted to barracks, fortifications, and armaments, the programme for ship-building under the Naval Defence Act—will, in combination, form a monument in honour of the Administration.

In candour, it would not be credible that such a magnificent record of achievement as this should be free from error or shortcoming. Already two mistakes—as we thought them to be—have been indicated, namely, the Parnell Commission of 1888 and the Licensing clauses of 1890. But, further, there was a notable shortcoming, in that the Ministry having prepared a Bill for Parish Councils, never found time to pass it. Having passed a Bill for County Government or County Councils, they might well have effected the complement of that great measure, by re-arranging the administration of parishes or groups of parishes and re-organizing the

rural Vestries. The Conservative Party will be fortunate if it is not forced to feel hereafter the consequences of this omission. A measure for this very purpose has been introduced and may be passed by their opponents. That will probably be attended with evils in detail, or fraught with objections that might have been avoided had the affair remained in Conservative hands. Moreover there was the failure, already pointed out, to pass the Local Government Bill for Ireland.

It will be replied that in these matters time is the main factor, and that it was against the Ministry. Yes, but for all that there probably was time enough in the six years, which might have been prolonged to seven years, had it been perfectly arranged and distributed. During their first four Sessions of 1886, 1887, 1888, and 1889, the Ministry did, on the whole, admirably well. The measures for the good administration of Ireland in 1887, for County Councils in England, 1888, and for Scotland in 1889, were all of undoubted prominence and were passed in the right order. But in 1890 a different order of things began. Looking back upon events, we must regret that in that year, 1890, Mr. Ritchie was not allowed to bring in and pass his Bill for

Parish Councils. Instead of that, the Land Purchase Bill, of unavoidable complexity, was produced, together with the Tithes Bill, which, though contentious, was comparatively simple. Both these measures were entirely checked for that year, by reason of a particular mistake relating to another measure, as already explained. The next year, 1891, the Irish Local Government Bill should have been introduced and passed. Instead of that the Session had to be devoted to the inchoate Bills of the preceding year. Then if the three main headings of the Unionist programme, for the administration of Ireland, the Local Government in Great Britain, the Local Government in Ireland, had been completed, the year 1892 would have remained for other measures. To that year might have been allotted the Irish Land Purchase Bill, and the Tithes Bill also, in case it had not been included in one of the preceding years. There was yet available at least a part of the Session of 1893, during which the Government might with propriety have retained Office. I believe that the real cause of the dissolution in the summer of 1892 was the fact that the Irish Local Government Bill had come too late, and that our men could not be kept together for it. But their

attitude and disposition might have been different had the Bill been brought forward in 1891. In 1893 then, several measures in which all Conservatives and Unionists took a genuine interest, such as the Employers' Liability Bill, might have been completed.

But even if in the course of a great administration some defects are perceptible, as will be incidental to all human affairs—there may have been reasons for what the Ministry did, or omitted to do, which were not within the cognizance of us Private Members. So we gladly gave to our distinguished Leaders the benefit of every doubt.

In respect to the conduct of Parties it is but just to add that the Conservative Administration and their Liberal Unionist allies, received much co-operation from their Gladstonian opponents in all projects of social legislation for the happiness of the people. The Liberals and Radicals did indeed attempt to engraft some of their own schemes upon these measures. Although they might fail in respect of these schemes, still they would support the measures in the main with much generosity.

The narrative has shown how time must ever be a factor in Parliamentary affairs. In this respect

there is always a tug-of-war contention between Ministers on the one hand and Private Members on the other. The Ministers have their national policy to pursue; and they are perhaps imperceptibly led to shut out, or shunt off, or set aside the various motions, resolutions and bills of Private Members. While allowing the necessity of this to some extent, the Private Members think they ought to be something more than pawns on the Ministerial chess-board. Consequently, after being closed in one direction, they find vent in another. To the Minister it may be said in respect of a Private Member

“ * * * expellas furcâ tamen usque recurret.”

The Private Members may see the days they had secured in the ballot appropriated by the Government, they may find the order of business so regulated that they can never obtain the desired hearing. But they will re-assert themselves, and take their revenge in other ways. They will prolong the debate on the Address at the beginning of a Session, multiplying Questions to Ministers during the best hours of every afternoon, set on foot discussions on going into Committee of Supply,

adduce, when in Supply, every topic relating to particular Votes, move the adjournment of the House upon some matter of urgency and so forth. Thus although much, if not most, of the time directly and formally allotted to Private Members may be taken from them, yet the miscellaneous portions of time which they indirectly obtain would, if it were exactly added up, amount to a goodly part of a Session.

Although the House resembles those tropical seas where calm generally prevails, but where tornados suddenly supervene—still it has a wonderful power of restoring order after boisterous scenes and tumultuous excitement. As a corporate body it never loses its head, however wild some individuals, or even some sections of its Members, may be for a moment. There are ever abiding with it the faculty of self-discipline, the sense of collective responsibility, the self-consciousness appertaining to an assembly that has no superior save the Crown. Thus, even after the most critical disturbance, Order rapidly reasserts itself.

It has been seen that during the late Parliament almost each Session had its hero. But there are some who have been heroes for nearly the whole of

the Parliament. Mr. Balfour was eminently such an one, for his administration in Ireland, and his management of Irish affairs in the House, constitute one of the brightest passages in the political history of this generation. He is a man endowed by nature with many gifts that had been enhanced by intellectual culture. His friends anticipate that he will exercise, in future Parliaments, that Conservative Leadership in the Commons which he well began during this Parliament. Mr. W. H. Smith left on his death, as a precious legacy to his Party, a reputation of which the foundation had been laid by the sterling qualities he had exhibited in several Parliaments, and which rested solely on plain, simple, solid merit. Lord Hartington from his position in the world derived a weight which he brought to bear on national enterprise, undertaken with single-minded patriotism and granitic firmness. Mr. Chamberlain played a noble and consistent part, sacrificing all the associations of Party for the sake of an imperial policy which he observed with impartial discrimination and vindicated with brilliant ability. He has risen to the very first rank of Parliamentarians, and his speeches are among the most momentous that can

be made in the House of Commons. It is hard to overestimate the value of the services rendered by these two Unionist Leaders to the good cause during this Parliament. Among their followers were many men who were fitted to be the ornaments of any Party, and who exerted much influence with the Conservatives in the House of Commons. Their alliance did, as we must admit, considerably affect, and in part even mould, the Conservative policy. They themselves, as enlightened Liberals, seemed quite at ease in their association with us Conservatives. Their Leaders have repeatedly said that the Government during this Parliament would compare favourably with any Government, by any Party, that had been seen since the first Reform Bill.

No understanding between two independent bodies could be closer or more cordial than that which has subsisted between the Conservatives and the Liberal Unionists during this Parliament. An agreement, beginning in respect to one grave subject, has extended to many other subjects. A spirit of forbearance and concession has prevailed on both sides, and—certain specified topics being kept apart—there has been a concurrence all

along a whole line of policy—a line quite extended enough to employ a combined Administration for the ordinary duration of a future Parliament. A fortunate experience has proved that there is between the best men of both persuasions an unanimity upon a comprehensive range of subjects. On the whole we all believe that this operative alliance, under the generic name of Unionist, is a phenomenon of happy augury for the future of British politics, being based upon faith in the imperial capacity of the United Kingdom.

Besides the general policy there have been two departments of State marked by potent individuality, namely, those relating to Finance and to Foreign Affairs. At the Exchequer Mr. Goschen, with his record of achievements, was truly a pillar of the Administration. In addition to technical and expert knowledge in his own great subject, he was fertile in resource for the controversies that raged on all other subjects. In Foreign Affairs, the direct agency of Lord Salisbury as Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, was apparent in the Lords rather than in our House. Still his Foreign Policy, raising the beacon of British influence to an imposing height throughout the world, did cast a

glowing reflection upon the troublesome waves as they surged in the Commons.

Lastly, there was Mr. Gladstone himself, second to no man of the Commons, or of any assembly anywhere, in political genius. But his constructive talent had no scope during this Parliament on the Opposition side, whereas his destructive energy did not succeed in destroying. Nevertheless, he adorned and illumined our debates from time to time with speeches, the beauty of which will ever linger in the memory even of his opponents.

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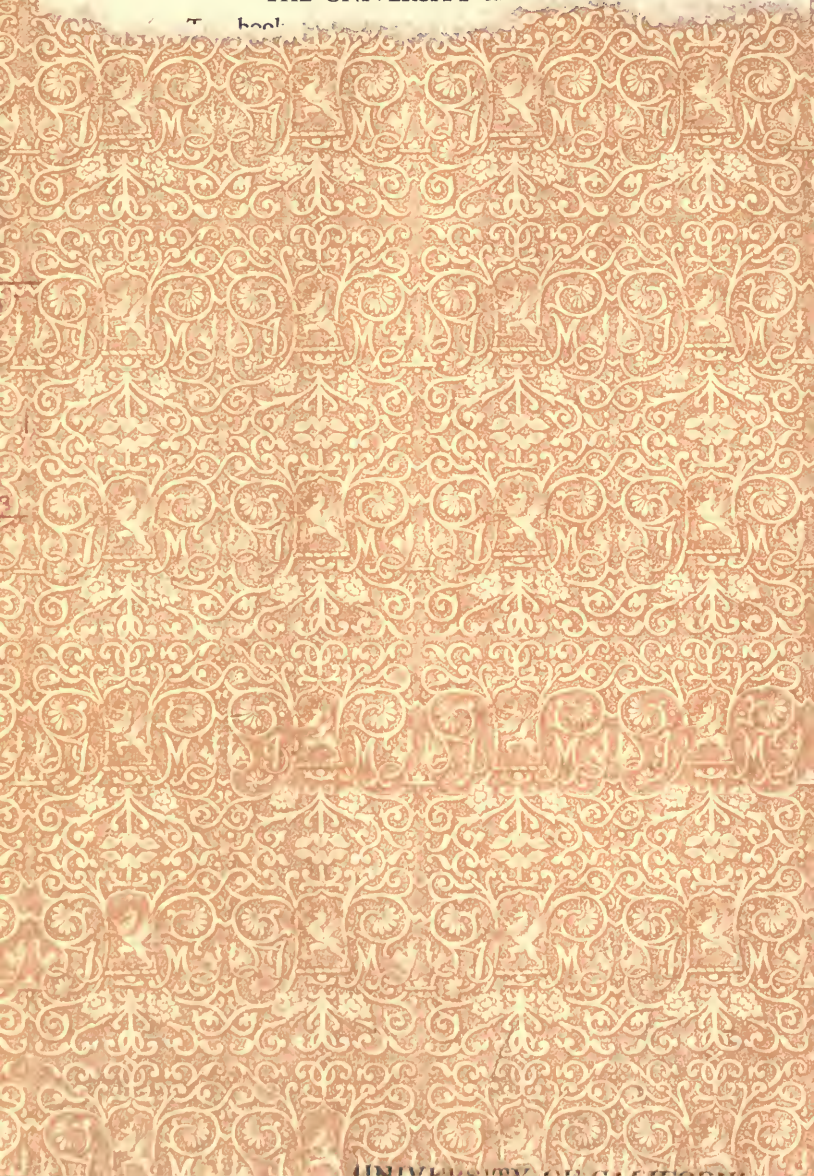
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